

THE GOOD PATCH

Edited by H. W. J. Edwards

THE RADICAL TORY

**Disraeli's political development illustrated
from his original writings and speeches**

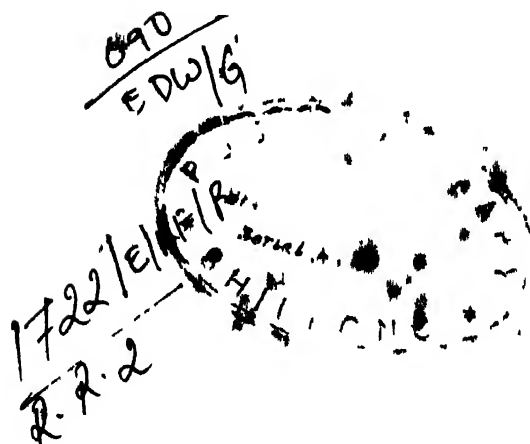
With a Preface by G. M. Young

THE GOOD PATCH

by

H. W. J. EDWARDS

With an Introduction by
ARTHUR BRYANT



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INTRODUCTION

MR. EDWARDS is a very remarkable young man. I believe that a few years ago he was a Communist, or something at least that most people would regard as akin to such. To-day he calls himself a Tory. I doubt if he would claim to be a Conservative. He is certainly a revolutionary.

For, like Cobbett and Francis Burdett and Disraeli, the Radical Tory whose early works he has so recently edited, Mr. Edwards is in strenuous rebellion. His revolt is against the comfortable and unimaginative intellectualism — Whiggism he would call it — that thinks of men, not as individual human beings, but as the co-ordinating units in vague social abstractions which it labels under such names as Labour, the Proletariat, the Bourgeoisie or Big Business. He hates these arrogant shams with the fervent enthusiasm of his race. He is at once a mystic and a realist: a realist because he sees (what most clever men fail to see to-day) the obvious, and a mystic because he sees (what only men who are something more than clever see) what lies underneath the obvious. As such he is in rebellion against the whole theorizing and pedantic spirit of our age, or to be precise of the age which is beginning to pass, but which in this sheltered country still holds all the reins of power. For that reason

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much that he writes will be easier to comprehend fifty years hence than it is to-day.

Yet very simple men and women, who live close to everyday realities and are unaccustomed to thinking in the verbal generalities of the professed intellectual, will probably understand Mr. Edwards's meaning at once. For it is a very simple one: that no political theory has any value or real existence save in relation to the life of every individual man or woman whom it affects, and that the life of every individual man or woman is bound up with the well-being of every other individual human being who has ever lived or is to live. For Mr. Edwards has ceased to be a Communist and has become a Christian. 'So', he quotes in his final sentence, so full of hope in a world that has lost its bearings, 'we go gathering Christian men'. 'For those who devote themselves to the thankless but rewarding task of politics, it is the only harvest worth the gathering.'

Mr. Edwards writes of the place in which he has lived — the Rhondda. This, least of all, is no cold abstraction to him. 'There is the Shot and Shell (the British Legion Club), the Resurrection (near the cemetery, Trealaw), the Greasy Waistcoat, the Dog and Muffler, and the Monkey. Few of the pubs in Rhondda can compete with these clubs in the humour of their names, but one pub can. That is Paddy's Goose near Tonypandy railway station . . .'. This is neither the thought nor the language of Whigs or bigwigs, nor of economists, or statisticians, or

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professional social reformers. What sort of a showing would these lordly ones make in the Dog and Muffler? The very name of the Greasy Waistcoat would probably cause them to pass by on the other side. Mr. G. K. Chesterton once wrote that Dickens's greatness as a human interpreter lay in the fact that he did not, like so many reformers, merely pity the sorrows of the poor, or what are sometimes termed the common people, but that he shared and rejoiced in their pleasures. Mr. Edwards has the same quality as a social historian.

ARTHUR BRYANT

PREFACE

THE word Rhondda has in these last days become more than the name of a coal-mining valley. For many years Rhondda has been regarded as one of those industrial districts where industrial strife raged as a matter of course, but lately it has become a sort of political idea. This is proper and traditional. Thus did Canterbury become much more than a cathedral city after the martyrdom of Becket, for that act became the typical act of all tyrannies against those who demand the supremacy of the spiritual, and thus Canterbury remains the city of religious and spiritual freedom.

Rhondda is a place made holy because it is a place where men live, marry, bring up their children, suffer and die — a valley where the spirit of man is as fine and as vigorous as anywhere else. Rhondda is, in other words, a valley of men and of families. That important fact seems often to be lost sight of by men who have written about Rhondda. Jack Jones, who may be a materialist, and is, in the modern jargon, called a realist, writes about Rhondda as if it were largely composed of charming but loud-mouthed, bibulous and otherwise inhospitable. When he wrote *Rhondda Rising* he seemed to forget that Rhondda is not a rising about — Rhondda people go to Portsmouth for their holidays — and that more the shape of a one-sided hill than that of the region which Mr. Jones has written

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Idealistic minister of Tonypandy, wrote in order, it must be admitted, to justify the work he undertook in Mid-Rhondda. Free as the book is from prejudices, and imbued as it is with a Christian spirit, it does not portray, nor would Rex Barker suppose it portrays, the whole of Rhondda life. Rex Barker felt himself encompassed about with the Marxist despair, and the Rhondda fatigue and awful distress of the time of his arrival bent all his energies towards a renovation of men's spirits the final result of which he would not see. Preoccupied with the dark shadows of Rhondda, he hardly saw and does not describe the happier elements in Rhondda life. He knew how difficult it was for an Englishman to see the religious culture and the light of faith in the Bethels and the homes of the Welsh folk of Rhondda in the way that a Welshman can. As an English socialist of the school of Morris, he was worried by the growth of a continentalized socialism of the Marxist kind, but he probably did not discover the sturdy radicalism of the Cobbett variety which flourishes throughout Rhondda, nor the natural conservatism among her people, whose real political affiliations are hidden under the form of the ballot box and under the sway of an oligarchy.

Then comes the book, *Cummardy*. Written by a Rhondda man, Lewis Jones, it is one of the finest expressions of one who would be proud to be called one of the proletariat. There lies the weakness of the book. When one critic pronounced it to be the best and most purely proletarian of many recent proletarian books,

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he unconsciously pointed out its defect. Even if we grant the existence of the frenchified abstraction, 'the proletariat' — and we have lately developed a bad habit of describing our British parties and institutions by using continental terms which mean little to us — we may not assume that Rhondda is made up of proletarians. This world has seen fit to imperil itself by falling in behind a gross assortment of political and sociological myths. From the time of Jean Jacques Rousseau, it has fled away from reason, that is from what is reasonable, and has tended more and more to fly to strange mythologies for its refuge. And one of these myths is that of the Economic Man. There have been several versions of this strange monster. There was Jeremy Bentham's which is now a little outmoded. There remains the version of Karl Marx. There are numerous others, some of them simple amateurish tales told to tired business men, and others — slight variants of the now widely interpreted tale of Marx. The point at issue is that there never was an Economic Man, and there never were those comic characters which the Marxist is so fond of talking about. The proletariat in the Marxist sense does not exist. It was the sort of thing which a man who belonged to the Victorian Age might very well invent, a particular class of men which was to be a sort of secular City of Man in the approved romantic tradition.

At the same time there are millions of men whose relationships to life and service to the commonalty are endangered by something not far removed from

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serfdom. How they may be preserved from further encroachments on their normal and classic life will continue to be debated. At the moment all that may be said is that these people should be looked upon as people. The unfortunate tendency is for men of the Right and men of the Left and men of the Centre to regard them as a sort of gang which enjoys a limited status — a body called the proletariat. That view is a worm's eye view; it is also Mr. Lewis Jones' view.

Mr. Jack Jones, Mr. Barker, and Mr. Lewis Jones write from a point of view; and in consequence their account is narrow, subjective and distorted. Rhondda must be seen as a whole.

Rhondda is much more than a valley composed of proletarians, if they exist. There may be in Rhondda a class war, and there probably is, but it is a matter of acute difficulty to discern who are the combatants in the class war. Marx's simplification may have suited a mechanist age, but there are so many contingencies abounding and so many interversions that it is inadequate now. But if we have to accept either Marx's interpretation of things or the still powerful whiggish doctrines of industrial capitalism, we may still have spirit left to try and know as much as we can about the other side. If Rex Barker fought Rhondda atheism it is worth while knowing the pleasant and cheerful Rhondda atheist. If there is a class war in Rhondda, it is worth while watching the warriors fraternize — at their recreations, for example. If most of the work of Rhondda is done under the mountain sides, and far down

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under the earth, the miners spend many hours on the mountain tops where are grassy slopes as well as coal tips, and where lambs gambol with their dams among the winberries. High above the serried ranks of cottages are the farms of Rhondda. They are just as much a part of Rhondda as the cinemas and the shops beneath them. Once farming represented the chief industry of Rhondda, and who knows that farming may not again be an important part of the valley's life? The farms are few and yet they stand above the industrial life of the valley as a sign that the people of Rhondda are not far removed from a rural life. Between the farms and the houses are the allotments of the Rhondda miners. The fathers and grandfathers of Rhondda citizens came mainly from the countryside, a fact which seriously modifies the character of her people who cannot be circumscribed in the Marxist pigeon hole of the proletariat.

It may seem that in violently resisting the popular Marxist treatment of a distressed area like Rhondda, the writer is trying to escape from the hard facts of life. That is not the object. Yet it is a veritable begging of the question to talk of the hard facts of life as if fact were necessarily brutal and cruel. Most men have some moments of pleasure in their lives and unless Schopenhauer's philosophy is more popular than it actually is, living itself ought not to drive men to despair. This is eminently true for the people of Rhondda who must be thankful for living even if it is filled with pain and tedium. With what a happy

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surprise do most people continually find this thankfulness, this zest for living even among those who have little of this world's goods.

Baedeker and the railway companies have not yet provided us with a guide to Rhondda. The railway companies are so closely concerned with the traffic of South Wales that it is strange that they so discreetly avoid the valleys they serve, when it comes to writing their annual guides for holiday makers. Mr. H. V. Morton and Mr. Hannen Swaffer did very well for Englishmen in almost discovering Rhondda. They were both in such a tremendous hurry, however, that they could not possibly hope to do more than touch on the salient points and more startling divergencies from the general tenor of ordinary life. Again the same criticism arises. Rhondda is worth knowing, not so much because Rhondda is distressed, not so much because Rhondda is different from, say, Bayswater, and not because Rhondda is 'in the public eye', but because Rhondda is an interesting valley when it is treated like any other place with courtesy and discrimination.

Those clever people who, with a rancour unknown even among theologians, debate the meaning of place names are almost certain to give numerous meanings of the word Rhondda, but whether the etymology is inaccurate or not, it is worth while recording the fact that the word Rhondda contains a secret which the realist with all his pub crawls and relations with boxing booth proprietors does not know of, which the idealist

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with his gaze fixed on a New Jerusalem cannot see, and which the champion of the proletarian would hate to have revealed. Rhondda is not a valley of wickedness, nor is it a valley of 'cases' for philanthropic inspection. It is certainly not a valley of 'Reds'. It is the valley of the Good Patch. The word Rhondda could be thus translated, but even if objections are raised against the translation of the word, none can be raised against the fact.

A man has to love the place he wishes to adorn and magnify. That, after all, is merely to say that a man must be a patriot. Now the tendency is for patriotism to flourish over a gigantic Empire, but to fade over a small valley. But the patriotism of the Empire is one with the patriotism of the small valley, and if the latter disappears the former means nothing, for imperialism hangs perilously upon parochialism. This helps to explain why the Jingo and the Little Englander are both wrong. For the man of Rhondda, Rhondda is his focal point; if he cares for Rhondda, for Tonypany better still, and for his little cottage in his hillside street best of all, he can begin to care for Sokoto, and Hobart. How otherwise can he love the projection of his land? Why should a man love an Empire when he has ceased to love his home? And how greatly may he cherish the farthest bounds of the king's realms when he has learned to love the little back garden hanging on the edge of his mountain.

All this prepares the mind for the news that Rhondda is in Wales. It is known of course that Rhondda is in

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Wales just as it is known that parts of Canada are near the North Pole, but there is a general line of thought which, while intellectually assenting to the proposition, does not take it to heart. During the prosperous years of the 'nineties two most worthy ladies came from England to Rhondda, and prepared to live there for several weeks. When they came they were shocked to find that the people were living in houses. They had imagined that they lived in caves like Colan of the Usk; they thought that Rhondda people were a variety of black men, that they lived like the apprentices of Disraeli's Wodgate, and that they were dying like flies in autumn. So astonished were they that they chose to return year by year for their summer holidays. Their example ought to be followed by any holiday maker for Rhondda and its surrounding hills and the Beacons at its back have all those amenities which are usually demanded in the 'picturesque' parts of Wales. To go to Rhondda as a visitor without pursuing an intention to investigate 'conditions' or to perform any other sociological action beyond enjoying oneself is to begin to discover Rhondda as part of Wales.

There is a further step which the mind can take. It is to understand Rhondda as part of that loose but now not nearly so disintegrated confederation which was once dignified by the name of the Celtic Empire. Wales itself is part of those five or six nations and dukedoms which are the survivors of that Empire which stretched almost to Rome, which was preached to by St. Paul when he travelled among the Galatians, and

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which extended from Ireland to Spain and from Scotland to Constantinople. Such an area of Europe was not inhabited by one ethnic group. The Celts were a caste — a ruling caste — which imposed its ascendancy in language and customs upon the tribes it governed. Wales is a microcosm of this ancient Empire. A Celtic language is spoken by its people, a Celtic literature with most delicate and subtle rules flourishes within its borders, and Celtic customs and traditions predominate. But Wales is no more racially Celtic than England is Anglo-Saxon. Rhondda and most of South Wales is even less Celtic than the rest of Wales. Rhondda is Welsh, and that means much more than to say it is Celtic. The professors do not profess to know much about the Celts, but most people may know something about the Welsh, the Bretons, the Cornish, the Scots of the Highlands, and the Irish.

The first two truths about the Welsh are that they are good people and Welsh people. They are certainly not English people, and the English people who come to live in Wales are by some secret process of national metabolism assimilated into the corporate body, and even become 'Welshy' in a way that the Welshman could not be. The Welsh are less English than any of the Celtic peoples, except of course the Bretons. Ireland has had wave after wave of English settlers, and quite as many of them settled in the south as in Ulster. Scotland, even in the Highlands, has been Anglicized as much as Scots can bear, and the 'auld alliance', the deer stalks, the Presbyterian conquest, and the Irish

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invasion have done their best to damage the Gaelic heritage. Cornwall retains its curious intransigence, but the Cornish language, despite efforts to keep it alive among antiquarians, has gone, and when someone manufactured the Cornish Riviera Cornwall lost very much of itself. But Wales is a far more foreign country to English people than France or Germany. In spite of the strong infusion of Welsh blood among English people, those very people persist in an irrational dislike of the Welsh which would take many pages to explain.

It is this English dislike, now cheapened to a kind of imitation pity, which has to be overcome before Rhondda can be understood. Prejudice has some value, but it is a barrier to understanding another people. It is said that Welshmen are liars and thieves, that they indulge in the Gasconade (and the Gascons are probably 'Celtic'), that they are loose livers, and that they are a nuisance. But all this, if it were true, would not suffice to explain the antipathy of the English to the Welsh. There is an historical explanation. For many hundred years the two nations have been living in a dangerous proximity which has produced clashes of culture often ending in armed battle. The wonder is that there are not more terrible legends about the Welsh, and for that matter about the English. As it is, the Welsh look upon the English as proud upstarts with crude manners, rude and tactless, and cold and unsociable, when the Englishman is eminently kind, utterly sentimental and easy going.

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A spurious cosmopolitanism which glosses over real differences between Welsh and English will not alter matters; only the sedulous cultivation of respect for the other nation will remove malice and suspicion. Rhondda has been more unfortunate than the rest of Wales in having received numbers of middle-class English people at a time when circumstance had so muddled its people's lives, and had, perforce, to send to the richer parts of England many of her poorer citizens, that the Rhondda folk are said to be the vilest of a vile nation. Such a fallacy takes a long time to die. Rhondda sends to the farthest bounds of the Empire some of her finest men and women, many of whom are honoured in lands so far away. And many of her humbler folk are at last beginning to surmount the bad times and the concentration of private distress which has been so unfortunately pushed into a blaze of publicity.

If ever you go to Rhondda, stay at a miner's cottage. Go, unless you are a teetotaller, to the Rhondda pub; go, unless you care little for religion, to a Rhondda chapel, a Rhondda church, and a Rhondda 'gospel' meeting. The Rhondda shops are quite as good as those in Cardiff: the films which you have seen in London are shown in Rhondda about a week after, and Rhondda has a fine taste in the cinema. Transport facilities are excellent, and the employees are a little more courteous than in London. There are no theatres but there are plenty of plays acted by amateurs who have little of the English reticence and plenty of

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natural dramatic ability. Concerts and dances, boxing matches and greyhound racing abound. And if you do not choose to climb the hillsides of the valley, there is plenty of mountain climbing the north of the valley. But when you go, go with the spirit with which you go to your yearly holiday. Remember that you are there to enjoy yourself and that you are prepared to pay the Rhondda people for it. They are a proud and a sensitive people; they hate accepting alms; but they love to accept a reward for their services.

If you have time explore the other valleys to the left and right of Rhondda. They have their own individual characteristics, but they are all worth knowing through loving.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author wishes to thank Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton for their permission to quote from *Christ in the Valley of Unemployment*, by Rex Barker, and Mr. Rowlands, the Editor of the *Rhondda Free Press*, for permission to quote from that journal. He is also sensible to the helpful advice given by Rhondda friends and relations, particularly Mrs. M. George of Trealaw, William Noble of Maes-yr-Hâf, Trealaw, and J. Wannell of Trealaw.

H. W. J. E.

CHAPTER I

WILD WALES

THE valleys of Rhondda, Rhondda Fach and Rhondda Fawr occupy the middle north-west of the populous shire of Glamorgan. Glamorgan itself is bounded on the north by Breconshire, on the east by Monmouthshire, on the north-west by Carmarthenshire, and on the south by the Bristol Channel. In extent it is nearly fifty miles, and its area is computed at 856 square miles.

In this area there is to be discovered a great diversity of scene. There are the mountains of the north concerning which Roscoe said 'there are few regions on earth that present more of the sublime and beautiful of nature, within the same compass, than are to be found among the hills and valleys of the north of Glamorganshire'. South of these mountains is a series of valleys which extend northwards in a manner which reminds one of the fingers and thumb of an outstretched hand. These are the coal-mining valleys and chief of them all is Rhondda, source of the finest steam coal in the world.

The coal mines end a little south of Pontypridd, once famous as a country market town, and renowned for the beautiful bridge built in a single span by that great bridge builder William Edwards. South of the mining area is the fertile vale of Glamorgan, called the Garden

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of Wales, which supplies the great cities of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport and their busy satellites with vegetables and dairy produce.

During the remotest part of its history, Glamorgan-shire formed part of the province known as Gwent or Essyllwg. The latter word means an agreeable region and its people were called after their land, their name being Latinized into the word Silures. If the Romans liked the land they did not the people — a race of swarthy and long headed men very different in appearance from those of other British tribes. These Silures had as chieftain the great Caradoc, who for nine years opposed the Roman arm, and although he was defeated his entire territory was never held by Rome. When 'Caesar's men left our land and waves of barbarians known as Saxons, Jutes and Angles set foot on the eastern shore of Britain, the Celtic tribes began to retreat westwards, and many of them reached the land of the Silures.

These Celts had known what the turbulent Silures had not known, the bitterness of complete defeat and subjugation by two powers, Rome and the barbarians. They settled in the Vale of Glamorgan and then in the valleys and intermarried with the native Silurian, so that the Glamorgan Welshman of to-day is the fruit of two races, and two traditions. Sometimes one meets a South Welshman who betrays his Silurian blood, which is erroneously called 'Celtic'. It is this Silurian blood which must be held responsible for much of the spirit of the Rhondda people. It underlies very much

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of the rebellion of the valleys, and its modification by a Celtic infusion and recently by the coming of the English has made the study of Rhondda people a most perplexing one. There can be little doubt, however, that the Silurian is closely related to the Asturian and the Galician of Spain, for apart from their racial characteristics they have other likenesses. Both are miners; both are natural fighters; both are rebels and lately Reds; and both have the same taste in food.

It is fortuitous that they are both miners, and it is fortuitous in the sense of unfortunate. Their inborn characteristic of revolting against oppression is a thoroughly healthy thing, but in the modern dilemma it is a most unhappy accident that the revolt has taken the form of an active participation in the politics of the Left. The rebel habit of mind is good and worth preserving but there is a necessary distinction to be made between that mind and a particular mode which it adopts. There is a muddleheaded confusion in contemporary affairs which has the effect of turning all the energies of the rebel spirit into the toils of an oriental political philosophy. Socialism of the Marxist variety has been imported into the Asturias and South Wales, and the pre-requisite for a righteous rebellion, the misgovernment of a people against their tradition, has been severely modified by the aims of the Marxists. If there were any grounds for revolt against a foreign and untraditional 'capitalist' system, the revolt should be aimed at restoring the traditional social order. But Marxism is the last amputation of

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that order. For the present, however, it is wise to restrain a facile condemnation of the spirit of revolt for it at least shows that the spirit of the people is healthy.

The history of Glamorganshire is one of war and riot, skirmishes and raids. The marriage of Celtic and Silurian blood implied a marriage of memories and characteristics. The unbeaten and assertive mingled with the defeated and introspective, and gave to their common descendants that combination of Gascon courage and diffident courtesy which qualities the English visitor so quickly notices. The Danes tried to force an entry into South Wales in the tenth century, but got no farther inland than Gower, and founded Swansea. It was due to men like Iestyn ap Gwrgam that the Danes came no farther, and that the Saxons were restrained beyond Chepstow. The Normans, however, settled in most of South Wales, built their castles throughout that land, and took over the old Silurian castle of Ivor Bach known to this day as Castell Coch. From the top of this castle the entrance to the Rhondda valleys could be watched and sporadic raiders checked. It is a living relic of the Norman conquest that in the mining valleys of South Wales we come across Norman surnames such as de la Ware and de la Mar. A friend of the writer married a lady from a village at the very extremity of the Gwynfi valley, near the tunnel through which the railway runs to the Rhondda valley. The lady's name was de la Ware, and the

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name had been borne by many generations in her village. This is a living legacy.

During the Middle Ages Wales gradually succumbed to the Norman English suzerainty. Glamorganshire took its share in the revolts against England, particularly when Henry IV outraged Wales by as unjust a series of enactments against Welshmen as has ever been known, and Rhondda particularly sent help to Owain Glyndwr in his almost successful revolt against the English tyranny. In the reign of Henry V, Wales had become loyal, and at Agincourt the English victory was due to the Welsh bowmen. The fall of Richard Crookback at Bosworth was a peculiarly Welsh triumph, for the Tudor Henry VII was a Welsh squire, yet it was no comfort to the Welsh to see his son Henry VIII filch the Welsh shire of Monmouth and add it to England. The Tudor period was a prosperous one for Wales, but the Reformation produced rioting, and when in Elizabeth's reign Penry tried to give Wales a Welsh Bible he was burnt at the stake.

All Wales with the exception of that part of Pembroke known as 'little England beyond Wales' was Royalist during the Civil War, and a battle between the Parliamentary forces and the King was fought near Cardiff at St. Fagans in 1648. Rhondda no doubt sent its quota of men to fight for Charles, just as it sent to Owain Glyndwr some of his finest fighting men.

In the eighteenth century, after the fall of the

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Stuarts, the whole of the British Isles fell under the influence of whiggism. Whiggism produced some strange and un-English not to say un-British confessions such as Pudding Time. That sort of decayed classicism represented by Lord Chesterfield among the oligarchy, and that low spirit of torpid acquiescence among the populace, Wesley fought with all his power as a Tory and a man of sensibility as well as a Christian. Wales fell into a very low humour during the eighteenth century, and the work of Wesley and his Welsh contemporaries has had the most far-reaching effects upon not only the religious habit of Welsh people but upon the texture of their common life.

Methodism was not merely a religious revival. It participated in a long line of coming social renovation; it was linked to the growing romantic revolt which produced very different reactions throughout Europe and which touched the French Revolution, the Waverley Novels, the Oxford Movement and the poetry of Wordsworth and his school. Wesley himself was a High Tory. In an age when piety had almost disappeared, and when Nonconformity had lost its early fervour, there yet remained sufficient of that spirit which had animated the Non-Jurors, and the Carolean divines and pietists, and it was found chiefly among certain members of the Church of England. There is an obvious line of descent from George Herbert through Bishop Ken, and William Law to the Wesley and the Methodist revival. The Welsh who had helped their king but who could not help him

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enough, were thanked in this most practical way by the coming of the Wesleys. Pudding Time fell before the emotion and the fervour of the Methodists. That sweetness and that virtue that accompanied Stuart, days returned with the preaching of men like Daniel Rowlands. If only there had been a greater discernment of such a fine and deep change in the hearts of her people!

But Methodism ended as 'so many magnificent movements have ended in sectarianism, and by one of those curious twists of history it found itself linked to one of the new schools of whiggism. Thus it happened that Methodism and other Dissenting beliefs have tended to be mixed with radicalism in politics. During the nineteenth century it was true to say that the chapels became committee rooms for Liberal candidates, and their ministers sometimes forgot their special mission as preachers of the Gospel to preach against the Established Church, and against the wicked Tories who would, if they could, send up the price of bread.

In the days before the repeal of the Corn Laws Rhondda was a great farming valley and her hillsides were ploughed to the last inch for the sake of growing wheat and other corn. But political prejudices are too often fatal to common sense. The tendency of the radicals to move away from the realism of a man like Cobbett, and even from the violent naivety of the Chartists, to the political romanticism and pedantry of Cobden and Bright, sent Dissenters helter skelter into

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• a morass of political turpitude from which they have not yet been delivered. The important point about Wesley was that he was no Dissenter and no Puritan, and his evangelistic work was the product of a life which owed much to catholicism, to the mysticism of Teerstegen and Boehme, and to the cavalier poets.

Yet in spite of a decline in the Methodist spirit and a divergence from its origins, Methodism did immense good to Wales. The great Methodist revivals from 1740 onwards, the '59 revival in the last century, and Evan Roberts's work in this are just a few of the peaks of Welsh religious life which will be dealt with in greater detail in a later chapter. The social effect of the revivals has been great. Religion has tended to act royally over the minds of her people, and has infused itself into very much of what is called secular. In few other lands, except of course in Roman Catholic countries, are secular activities so caught up with religion. Italy has a patronal festival for omnibus conductors, but Wales might without altering her customary life have a patronal festival for band and choir conductors. Wales is religiously Protestant, but that Catholic habit of mind which would use secular things as a vehicle for transferring religious graces flourishes there very well. Nowhere else in Great Britain does the atmosphere of the chapel so permeate the lives of men and women, many of whom are not even nominally attached to a religious body. The element of puritanism loses much of its calvinistic flavour, and except for the straiter sects, is gently

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coerced into a minor place in religious life. That is true at any rate for South Wales and Rhondda. North Wales has a different story to tell.

Religion — the religion of the 'association', and the chapel — is an integral part of Welsh history and an important one too. The history of the populous south-east of Wales has been one of industrial growth, accompanied by industrial unrest and the search for coal. But that history may never be understood unless it be observed that, remaining constant amid those dancing figures of strife and counterstrife, social upheavals and capitalist expansion, is the figure of religion ever touching those transient and unsteady elements, ever ennobling them, ever transfiguring them, and resolving them into submissive messengers of its own central and permanent being. Religion is all that for Wales. Only this pivotal source of movement could have held from perilous dissolution the coming swarms of immigrants, and the era which changed Rhondda to an industrial valley.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF RHONDDA

HAPPY is the nation which has no history is an aphorism which contains this truth that a contented people has little in the way of battles and political struggles to record. Rhondda which for centuries had known little of tumult and unrest was in the early part of the nineteenth century a valley of happy people, and even when Mr. Bacon was exploiting the iron and coal at Merthyr on its east, and when the bathers at Swansea were being upset by the smoke and 'the noxious effluvia which in some states of the wind are brought in from the copper and chemical works of the neighbourhood', Rhondda remained hardly touched by the surrounding industrialism.

Yet in spite of the popular impression, Rhondda has an ancient history crammed with incident and life. The cromlechs and druidic remains show that Rhondda history goes very far back into those dim days of the pre-Christian era. The existence of a Druidic Circle at Pontypridd presupposes that Rhondda's religious sentiments were founded long before the coming of the Christians. The Roman roads and Craig yr Heg, a Silurian and Rhondda stronghold, are still pointed out.

Rhondda history does not come into written records, however, until comparatively recent times. The first

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studied records were those made by Leland who was commissioned to make diligent inquiries into the state and condition of Wales in the reign of Henry VIII. But long before this the medieval chroniclers were doing their best to make unofficial perhaps but nevertheless faithful records of the valley. They tell us of Owain Glyndwr's right-hand man, Cadwgan y Fwyell who lived not far from Dinas in the Rhondda Fawr. Then there was the great Rhys ab Tewdwr who was slain in a skirmish against the Normans in 1091 and buried with his faithful followers on what is still called Bryn y Beddau, the Hill of Graves. Nearby a Franciscan monastery grew up and a village which was aptly named Mynachlog (the monastery). Cadwgan y Fwyell in helping Owain Glyndwr against the English was defeated in a battle close to this monastery which Henry IV destroyed as a punitive measure. Strange that this so long ago ruined monastery has remained and the name of its site, Pen Rhÿs, has been given to a modern Rhondda district, an isolation hospital, a farm-house which incorporates some of its structure, and a recently built Catholic church in Ferndale over the hill in the little Rhondda. A holy well remains also.

A great eisteddfod was once held either in the monastery or close to it. It was held, as many an eisteddfod was held, before an outbreak of military rebellion. The poet, the bard and the soldier were then closely joined together, and indeed were very often the same man. The association of religion,

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represented by the monastery, with music and patriotic song have so very often prepared the way for battle. Such preparations seem grotesque nowadays but that is because we do not battle for religion — for what someone described as ‘the happiness and the virtue of a man’, but for frontiers and trade routes. Owain Glyndwr was not fighting merely for Welsh nationalism. The medieval did not as a rule fight for a purely secular reason; if he were defending a swamp he would proclaim he was defending something sacred and his battle-cry would be ‘For God, for St. Somebody, and the Swamp!’ That helps to explain why one of the most beautiful religious poems in any language was composed and recited at that cisteddfod. It was composed and recited by a certain Gwilym the Fat and dedicated to Mary the Fair Virgin of Pen Rhŷs. It is supposed that the herculean Cadwgan of the Battle Axe was present. As one of Owain’s captains he would stride along his valley whetting his gigantic battle axe and from time to time he would call to his men for their feudal service to him. Owain Glyndwr’s habit was to send by a medieval system of rapid telegraphy the message, ‘Whet thy battle axe’, and within a very short time, all living Rhondda persons, male and female, young and old, would assemble round Cadwgan, and in military order his armed bands would move suddenly and with deadly effect towards the hated Lancastrians. From that day to this the traditional cry of Rhondda has been, ‘Cadwgan, whet thy battle axe’.

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When Leland went to make his investigations into Welsh affairs, he found Rhondda a happy and prosperous region of farms and cornland. There were then two wooden bridges over the two Rhondda rivers, and at their confluence at Porth there was another. Leland came across the village of the monastery, but he probably did not see everything of Rhondda for he refrains from mentioning the ruined monastery (though as an emissary of Henry VIII this was quite discreet!) and the iron foundry at Pontygwaith, which some say was built in the early half of the sixteenth century by a certain Anthony Bacon. There is another story that this iron foundry was built in 1788 by a firm from Glyn Neath, and yet another that there were two iron foundries. Many of the farmhouses besides Pen Rhŷs have historical associations, particularly Cwmsaerbren, Tynewydd (once the home of Colonel Edwards, a well-known Rhondda gentleman), Hendre Geulan, Clungwyn, Tonllwyd, and Tydrau, where the old Rhondda squires, the Llewellyns, used to live. They are relics of an older and a saner age than ours and belong to another world than the Rhondda of the crowded streets.

In those days Rhondda was made up of three parishes, Ystraddyfodwg, Llanwynno, and Llantrisant. The first named cared for the north, the second for the eastern, and the third for the western and lower parts of Rhondda. There was some commerce, but it was on a small scale, and chiefly due to Rhondda forestry. The timber of Rhondda

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in days long ago was as great an asset to the Royal Navy as was the steam coal during the Great War. An advertisement in the *Star* of 1804 sheds some light on that. It reads:

For sale. Valuable timber suitable for the Navy.
480 oak timber trees growing at Penrhiwgwynt in
the parish of Llanwonno.

Coal was cheap then. Although hardly any coal was mined in the Rhondda the price was only 1½d. for a two-hundredweight bag. The gradual encroachments of industry could not succeed in taking away the basic rural character of the valley. A big township like Porth, standing at the head of the valley like a guard against the invaders had, even in 1845, only twenty-five houses in all, including one chapel, one mill and one inn. Then travellers used to say kind things of the valley: 'Exquisite effects peculiar to mountain scenery which a Claude could not transfer to canvas'. 'Air aromatic with the wild flowers and mountain plants — where a Sabbath stillness reigns.'

One of the first coal pioneers was a Dr. Richard Griffiths of Pontypridd who opened a level at Gyfeillon in 1790 and was so successful that he laid three miles of tramroad to link up with the new canal at Treforest. In 1808 he leased the mineral rights to the Morgan Estate, and the G.W.R. became one of the principal sub-lessees.

The mine at Dinas was opened in 1806 and another tramtrack of three miles was laid to join up this mine

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with the Porth. Before the opening of the railway such means had enabled the owner Dr. Coffin to send 56,000 tons to Cardiff. In 1830 London received 400 tons of Rhondda coal. It came from the Cymmer pits which are still one of the biggest and finest of all in the Rhondda. They have been fairly free also from explosions, but this record is terribly marred by the great disaster of 1856 and the explosion of 1937.

The inextricable contacts of Rhondda industry with Rhondda culture is well illustrated by the brothers David and John Thomas. With their other brother, the Welsh bard 'Islwyn', they formed a remarkable trio. The story of these two industrialists suffices to dispose of those superficial critics who too sweepingly and uncritically condemn the pioneers of the 'capitalist system'. Their story is comparable to that of Palliser the Potter. Like him they struggled against every possible sort of misfortune. Unlike him they failed. The encountering of a gigantic geological 'fault' and the pressing need for money (they spent £30,000) proved too great for them, and their colliery passed first into the hands of Lord Merthyr, and then to Powell Duffryn.

One of Rhondda's earliest industrial 'characters' was Mr. James Thomas (Shams Tomos), the grandfather of Sir William James Thomas of Cardiff. He was the son of a small Monmouthshire farmer, and came to Rhondda to work as a 'door boy'. Then he set out to work at a colliery three miles away at three

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shillings a day. He would begin work at four in the morning and would finish at eight in the evening. His combined shrewdness and self-denial enabled him to save sufficient to join a group which bought a small colliery at Troedyrhiw. Later he bought the Tynewydd colliery which firmly established his fortune. His last venture was the sinking of the Standard colliery, Ynyshir.

In April 1877, the Tynewydd colliery was flooded, a circumstance that provided one of the most thrilling incidents in the history of the South Wales coal-field. The floods came as the men were preparing to leave, and the inrush of roaring waters burst terribly upon them all. In spite of that the majority escaped after a desperate struggle. Five were rescued the next day, but five were left in the mine and little hope was entertained of their lives. Heroic measures were used to rescue them; divers from London came but failed. Forty yards of coal barrier had to be hewn through. This done, the men were reached, but still they had to pass through chambers of compressed air, explosive gas, darkness and flood water. They did reach the surface, and when the story of heroism was known to the world, a deep impression was made upon the hearts of men from the humblest to the mightiest. Their prayers, as the advancing waters lapped first their feet and then their waists, and their singing of 'Yn y dyfroedd mawr a'r tonnau,' hundreds of feet below the earth, touched many a hard heart. One day perhaps a memorial to this, but one of many

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brave and decorous actions in Rhondda, will be set up.

Before these first colliery experiments and disasters, writers vied with each other in describing the valley in the most luxuriant and sometimes over elegant prose.

The romantic movement of the early nineteenth century moved men away from the classic artificiality of the eighteenth century and for the first time the beauties of mountain and heath and torrent and waterfall were praised in a manner which would have irritated a sensible man like Cobbett. The same romantic movement is responsible, however, for the Manchester Ship Canal, and the rise of industrial wens, so that Cobbett may have been right in preferring arable farming land. But Cobbett and his movement ended with the last Tory rebellion known as Chartism and the writers of purple passages survived.

'Sixty years ago', wrote one man, 'the tourist travelling from Pontypridd to Blaenrhondda or Blaenycwm, a distance of thirteen miles, would find himself in a vale rich in natural beauty and wooded heights with but few human habitations to break the solitude of the scene. The slopes of the hills would be clothed with coppices of trees, some of very large growth, some of a stunted character near the summits of the mountains, which made the valley a veritable paradise in the variety of its landscape.

'The Rhondda river, a clear limpid stream, beguiled

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its way from the highlands of Craig-y-llyn, Carn Moesyn, Pen Pych and Mynydd Ystrad ffernal, sometimes in a narrow and rapid torrent, impeded by rocky fragments, at other times laving through rich meadows and by woody groves of the finest oaks¹ to arrive at a spot about two miles above Pontypridd where the river flows between Mynydd y Glyn on its right and Taran y Pistyll on its left.' Here the writer lapses into a forgivable but tedious and long-winded panegyric on the waterfall. There was certainly a salmon leap at this point and about the year 1805 a 'rustic' alpine bridge made out of the local trees. In the early years of the nineteenth century the stream was highly esteemed by anglers who knew its waters to contain salmon, two varieties of trout and sewin.

Another description of Rhondda in the year 1803 fills in much of Rhondda's pre-industrial blank spaces.

'The parish of Ystradyfodwg exhibits such scenes of untouched nature as the imagination would find it difficult to surpass, and yet the existence of the place is scarcely known to the English traveller. Those who know the wilds of Ystradyfodwg have seen such woods and groves as are rarely to be found. The almost perpendicular sides of the hills are clothed nearly to the top with dwarfish stunted oak scarcely exceeding the size of garden shrubs. Towers of naked stone occasionally start up which overhang the road and seem to endanger the traveller.' Of the part above

¹ When the allotments began to be dug huge pieces of old black oak were found.

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Porth he says: 'Hereabout and for some miles to come there is a degree of luxuriance in the valley beyond what my entrance to this district led me to expect. The contrast of the meadows rich and verdant, with mountains the most wild and romantic surrounding them on every side is in the highest degree picturesque. On the farm of Llwynypia standing alone by the roadside there is the tallest and largest oak tree I have ever happened to see.' How very thinly peopled it was may be judged from the following remark: 'I have met with but one person of whom I could ask a question since my entrance into the parish.'

As late as 1845 the author of the *Book of South Wales* gave another account of Rhondda.

'We shall never forget', he writes, 'our first impression of Ystradyfodwg. When we had walked about half a mile over the hill, the clouds which had been down on the hill began to lift, and suddenly the Green Valley unfolded itself before us with one of those exquisite effects peculiar to mountain scenery, which a Claude could not transfer to canvas. The valley stretched for a distance of eight to ten miles between two nearly parallel lines of hills, broken by a succession of cliffs of singular beauty, apparently terminated by a vast alpine headland, and feathered by trees or copse of wood to its summit, a mountain chief Pen Pych keeping watch as we descended. The emerald greenness of the meadows in the valley below was most refreshing. The scenery when explored in detail realized the first impression. The air is aromatic' with

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the wild flowers and mountain plants. A Sabbath stillness reigns . . . It is the gem of Glamorganshire.'

Already when these words were being penned the new Rhondda was being planned. By the year 1874 coal had become Rhondda's main industry. Just north of Pontypridd comes Hopkinstown where one of the first collieries was started, and where one of the first 'letter houses' (post offices) in Rhondda was built. Hopkinstown's coal mine was called Simon's Level, and unlike many of the Rhondda mines only *glo rhwyn* (that is house coal) rather than *glo ager* (steam coal) was worked there, the latter being at too great a depth. Slightly to the north the villages of Gyfeillion and Hafod grew up rapidly. The Welsh Methodists built a big chapel at the former village, and the Baptists in 1852 built a chapel which they called Capel Rhondda at the latter which is still flourishing. Near here in 1856 was built the chapel of ease of St. David's under the parish church of Llanwonno, and a British school and letter office (*llythyrdy*) were added. Close by was the huge Great Western colliery with one hundred and twenty-two furnaces for producing coke (*golosglo*).

Coal has been worked at this spot for a longer time than man can remember, and in 1874 the ancient workings could still be seen. The Taff Vale railway then ran to Hafod. Farther north is Gwaun yr Eirw where two more pits were sunk, the Coadcae 363 feet in depth with sixty-six coke ovens, was sunk at an older 'level', and the Llwyncelyn on the eastern side of the river with twenty coke furnaces. Here the

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Congregationalists built a chapel in 1863 and the Government a letter office. Not far from this pit there was an historic fight between a bull and a horse which happened on a Sunday, much, no doubt, to the disgust of the local Sabbatarians.

Porth and Cymmer are the next villages (Porth is now a good-sized town) on the journey northwards. Here, where in ancient times the Rhondda was spanned by bridges, is the meeting place of the two divisions of the Rhondda valley, and at Pontygwaith close by were the old iron works. A road called Furnace Road perpetuates the otherwise forgotten ruin. At Cymmer there will be long remembered a famous farm-house called Nyth Bran, or 'the crows' nest', named after a famous Rhondda runner of that name, who could catch a wild mountain pony by simply running after it. He lies buried in Llanwonno churchyard.

Cymmer before the coal era consisted chiefly of farm-houses — Ty'n y Cymmer, Maendy, Ynyshir, Troedyrhiw, and Llwynycelyn. In 1744 the Congregationalists founded Ty Cwrdd y Cymmer, the Cymmer Meeting House, and in 1870 another — much larger and not so well looking. The coming of the coal pits brought a sudden change to the district. At first, small pits on the lowest land at Porth were sunk, and were called Pwll y Porth, and Glyn Fach. They have long since ceased working. In 1847 the Cymmer Pit, where there was a recent explosion, was sunk. It is 330 feet deep, and a combination of two

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older pits. In 1856 Cymmer Pit suffered a terrible explosion and one hundred and fourteen men gave their lives in the search for coal. In 1860 Ynyshir Pit was opened. It was a much shallower mine less than 200 feet deep, and what is known as number two seam was worked. These pits, together with the New Troedyrhiw and the Dinas colliery, increased greatly the houses and population of the Rhondda. Cymmer, Porth and Little America are now one large township hardly to be separated from each other. Chapels, churches, shops and schools soon altered the whole complexion of the older rural countryside. The first National school was built in America Fach in 1857, as well as a British school in 1868, and at Dinas the Congregationalists built a chapel in 1869 near the pit.

At Llwynypia (Magpie's Grove) there used to be only one farm-house, and Malkin in 1801 described it as one of the most desolate spots in the world. The discovery of coal as far north and even farther changed the appearance of the place in a year. In place of the meadow and the heather-covered hillside, cottages and a thriving township appeared. The Baptists built a chapel which they called Jerusalem, now a very strong and big chapel, and the Calvinistic Methodists a peculiar little place, now gone. The Unitarians also built their meeting house.

The next village north was the ancient centre of Rhondda, Ystradyfodwg, now known as Ystrad Rhondda. Tyfodwg ab Gwilyfw, the patron of the

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parish, was a sixth century British saint of Bangor Iltyd. It is said that he founded this church and that at Llandyfodwg. The parish was 19,591 acres, not counting the bleak region of Rhandir Rhigos, and in 1800 there were but one thousand souls in it. In 1861 there were but 3035. In ten years the population had jumped to 16,935.

It must not be argued from this that Rhondda had before the year 1800 been always so thinly populated. If the evidence of ancient bards and annalists can be taken as at least part evidence, then many hundreds of years back there were many thousands living in Rhondda. Cobbett's footrule, the seating capacity of pre-reformation churches, is useful here. Medieval Rhondda had three churches, and a monastery, and many pilgrims journeyed to the Holy Well. That suggests a much larger population than a bare thousand, and we must remember that Owain Glyndwr relied greatly on Rhondda for his army. The village of Ystrad in 1860 was very small indeed, but when the pits were opened rows upon rows of houses were built, and in 1869 a market place was constructed and proved very useful to a people who had had to go a mountainous journey to Pontypridd whenever they wanted to shop. The chief pits here were Pwll y Ton and Phwyll y Pentre. One February day in 1871 there was a loud explosion in the Pentre Pit and forty lives were lost.

All this while the ownership of land was undergoing change. The older landowners found new

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neighbours in the Marquis of Bute, Earl Dunraven, and Mr. de Winton.

Tre-orchwy (Treorchy as it is now called) to the north became a large town in ten years. Three important pits were sunk here, the Abergorky, Cwm Parc, and Tyla Coch. In 1871 Cwm Parc pit exploded, flames came up the shaft, and burned the woodwork at the surface to ashes. A British school was built here, and many chapels. This is the *glo ager* (steam coal) district, and in fact steam coal is mined from the Dinas area northwards. Treherbert, a mile farther on, in 1850 was another farming area, but here as at Porth there are evidences of very old coal workings. In 1872, when a new level was being opened as part of the Bute colliery, the excavators burst through an old working which not even the oldest inhabitants had ever heard of. Lord Bute bought this land and sunk the Bute colliery in 1850. The Dunraven colliery was sunk on the western side of the river, and on the eastern side Tynewydd (the new house), and Ynysfeio. In 1861 a National school and in 1864 a chapel of ease were built. In 1872 Rhondda had its gas works, and a police court, or *llys leddynadol i weinyddu'r gyfraith*, as the Rhondda people eloquently named it. In 1869 the northernmost part of Rhondda fell a victim to the coal rush. Blaenrhondda colliery was the deepest of the early collieries, 1200 feet deep, and the Fern Hill was built soon after. The other pits in Rhondda were Bodringallt, Bwyllfa, Gelligaled, Blaenclydach Cwmclydach, and Penygraig.

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The following list and comparison of the collieries of Rhondda helps to show the basis of the change of Rhondda's life.

OUTPUT IN TONS

	1865	1870	
Dunraven	20,383	98,915	+
Bute Merthyr	35,388	67,346	+
Ynysfeio	28,612	24,918	—
Abergorki	23,817	132,343	+
Pentre	40,211	50,790	+
Church	26,138	—	—
Bodringallt	29,822	30,412	+
Gelligaled	8,042	2,304	—
Bwlfa	31,277	51,335	+
Blaenclydach	24,275	21,114	—
Cwmclydach	44,220	62,251	+
Dinas	42,114	45,495	+
Llwynypia	81,672	88,499	+
Penygraig	15,157	88,961	+
Troedyrhiw	47,978	36,973	—
Ynishir	18,766	30,851	+

COLLIERIES OPENED SINCE 1869

Rhondda Merthyr (Blaenrhondda)	44,942
Ocean	290,999
Tylacoch	30,491
Gilfach Goch	34,309
Adare (now the Naval)	34,175
Ferndale	64,626

We can see from the foregoing that it was in the

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'fifties and 'sixties of the last century that the industrial revolution came to Rhondda. The first pit in Rhondda proper — that is the Rhondda above Porth — beckoned the railway to that village whose name means the city. From Pontypridd, or Newbridge as it was then called, past Cymmer and Porth, to Dinas crept the Taff Vale Railway, and another line belonging to the Great Western Railway ran from Llantrisant to Penygraig just over the western side. For many years these were the only communications for a valley soon to grow in importance and population. The Dinas mine began its course under the management of a Mr. Havard and a Mr. David Davies, two of whose daughters are still living in the valley. Mr. Davies was a man well remembered by old Rhondda folk with a respect given usually to the benevolent Tory squire.

Mr. David Davies was a kind of squire in his way; he was certainly a Tory; he conducted the mine and cared for the miners like a patriarch. Self taught and in these days of barbaric refinement and shallow intellectualisms outmoded, he and his fast disappearing type remain the model of the good Tory employer. In the tradition which Disraeli would have understood he helped to found the old Dinas Co-operative stores. The Co-operative society, for all its transient association with the political Left, is not a product of Left principles. The Co-operator will find his society in the pages of Disraeli's *Sybil*, or in the works of the Confessed Tory Ruskin, and the Tory-Socialist William Morris. The spirit of the Rochdale pioneers, more-

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over, was far more apparent in the old Dinas society than in the modern 'co-op' because it existed principally as a society for the miners themselves, and not like the modern society, as one of the competitive 'big stores'.

Life in Rhondda then was in many ways much better than it is now. There was no unemployment and wages were good. In the Boot Inn at Dinas, the landlady would sit evening by evening with an apronful of sovereigns collected from miners who, in their hurry to work the next shift, hardly saw their lodgings but practically lodged at the inn where there was plenty of good food and beer with a proper percentage of maltose. Unfortunately the housing conditions were shocking in the 'fifties and 'sixties, and were aggravated by a local rule which requested householders to lodge at least two miners. Sometimes there was a dangerous congestion.

The main coal rush began after 1870 and rose to its peak between 1890 and 1904. Until 1870, despite the few collieries, Rhondda retained much of its unspoilt rural solitude of woods and ferns, streams and parks. In a few years a devastating change swept over it. Long strings of cottages owned by the new colliery companies straggled over the valley and up the mountain sides. The townships rushed upon the delicate countryside, and a swarm of immigrants clamouring for work precipitated the rise of a new Rhondda, hardly touched by aristocratic taste, and therefore easily tossed about by heretical winds from the Left. This is a picture of the Rhondda of 1907:

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'How changed is the prospect. The river, instead of being a stream of perfect clearness, is now a dark, turgid and contaminated gutter, into which is poured the refuse of the host of collieries which skirt the thirteen miles of its course. The eternal hills are still in their ancient places, but how disfigured? Their slopes have been stripped of all their woodland beauty and there they stand, rugged and bare, with immense rubbish heaps covering their surface. Their original solitude and stillness have been usurped by the bustle of trade, and the whole length of the valley, from being an incomparable Elysian glade, has been transformed into a veritable Cyclopean workshop where the din of steam engines, the whirl of machinery, the grating sounds of innumerable coal screens and the hammering of the smithies proceed unceasingly night and day, year in and year out. Here and there, throughout the valley, we find immense coke ovens which belch out flames of fire from their burning furnaces.

'The industrial townships of this valley appear to be inseparably connected with each other in one continuous stream of workmen's cottages from the head of the vale to Pontypridd. They are Blaenrhondda, Treherbert, Treorchy Cwmparc, Pentre, Ystrad, Llwynypia, Tonypandy and Trealaw, Dinas, Penygraig, Porth and Cymmer in the larger valley, and Maerdy, Ferndale, Tylorstown, and Pontygwaith in the smaller.'

There are many other sub-districts and little villages, which will be later considered. The railway crept up the valleys as the mines opened up, and where the

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railway went, the outside 'civilization' went also. Thus there came about a sudden and colliding mixture of drunkenness, revivals, and solid common sense life.

The chief problem of all at the beginning of industrial Rhondda was the lack of women. Each of the houses where a group of miners lodged had as a rule but one woman to cook and 'do' for them, and if the real unit of society, the family, was to provide Rhondda with its reason for existence it was vital that women of marriageable age should come to Rhondda to help construct the family. Some miners came with their wives but most were single; others solved the problem by bringing wives from Weston-super-Mare and Bristol. The main solution was found when the shops, schools, and hospitals were built. Then came shop assistants, typists, schoolteachers and nurses, and Rhondda, although it has always had fewer women than men, has long ago forgotten the problem of the surplus man.

By 1904, when the coal rush may be said to have ended, Rhondda was thoroughly urbanized, and began to include within its villages outside its proper borders, such as Gilfach Goch, Tonyrefail, and Trehafod. The Rhondda of the philanthropist is even wider since it includes all of the western valleys which are menaced by unemployment and distress. Rhondda returns two members of parliament and it has its own urban council house at Ystrad where all the administrative side of Rhondda is looked after. Long before the Taff Vale Railway amalgamated with the Great Western line, all the villages of Rhondda had their

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railway station and the mountains at the northern end were pierced by a railway tunnel which joins Rhondda with the Gwynfi valley where iron and smelting works take the place of coal. The old Great Western terminus at Penygraig is still used by travellers to places like Porthcawl, but to get to London one travels on the old Taff Vale line.¹

For many years the most important form of transport was the tram which came in 1906 and about three years ago gave place to the bus. The Rhondda tram, a noisy, narrow gauge clattering, very uncomfortable vehicle, jangled along the whole length of the valleys. One grew to care for the old tram. It took to itself the authentic characteristics of Rhondda, and was not the cosmopolitan and slightly snobbish thing that the bus seems to be. The bus system connects with the world outside Rhondda, and even takes its boarders to Cardiff and Porthcawl. There are also the London coaches which always seem to smell of blankets. Local custom still commands the transport systems. The tram conductor would always wait for a fare, and the bus conductor carries on the tradition. He will wait with a patience which to a hustling people may seem old fashioned, and there are no rules about smoking in the lower deck. It is the train which is the most courteous to late travellers. There are local trains in the South of France which attend upon the delayed farmer or peasant woman, and drivers in the South of

¹ The first form of transport for the public was an old and shaky horse bus which plied from Porth to Treherbert.

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Ireland have been known to wait for someone they either know or hope to be travelling by their train. The same sort of thing happens in Rhondda where, if the trains do not run to time as they are supposed to do in renascent Italy, it is all to the comfort of the people. It was only a year ago that a local train stopped in a Rhondda station and waited for a gentleman to perform his toilet in the station lavatory.

That is courtesy and is worth the price of arriving a few minutes late at the journey's end. It is a sign that the construction of the industrialist system on an older social order does not destroy completely all the primary elements of the people. The superficial traveller might see Rhondda to-day from end to end and fail to see the old and enduring Rhondda in the new. It is not accurate to say that the old Rhondda has gone, even if the new Rhondda has come. The mountains are still there even though the refuse from the pits has been thrown on their summits; the stream is still there even though the trout have long since gone, and it is grimy with coal dust; the farms remain though the railway runs where once were water meadows, coltsfoot grows prodigally by the sleepers, and the sheep stroll down into the streets and peer curiously into drapers' shops; the Rhondda climate persists — a mild oceanic climate with a heavy rainfall near the Beacons amounting to sixty inches at Blaencwm; but rapidly decreasing towards Porth; most precious of all, the Rhondda folk remain and in spite of miscegenation they remain Rhondda folk.

CHAPTER III

THE DWELLERS IN THE VALLEY

THE opening of the first pit at Dinas brought to the middle of Rhondda the first batch of immigrants, most of whom came from Wales. Immigrants, however, they were, for each district of Wales has its intense local patriotism surpassing anything known in England and holding its own with the fine parochialism of Cornwall. The Welsh immigrant was regarded by the indigenous Rhondda folk as not much better than a foreigner, and if he hailed from Pembrokeshire, the stranger was held at even greater arm's length than if he had come from, say, Somerset. The difficulties which arose when masses of immigrants arrived in a very short space of time were most critical, and the wonder is that industrial unrest and all the other consequences of camping large aggregations of men in two narrow valleys were not greater.

By 1890 the first groups of immigrants had become assimilated into the old Rhondda population which was once so small that one baker served them all. The coal rush did not merely mean a sudden increase in population but a sudden grouping together of individuals drawn from the four corners of the world. Such a grouping could not be termed Society, for Society is not an aggregation of individuals but a coherent and even organic Thing which transcends

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those individuals who compose it. Society is, to use a word beloved of the Marxist, a solidarity, but that solidarity is not shaped like a flat pancake but like a wedding cake — fit symbol of a marriage of dissimilar participants in a united vocation. As it was, the old hierarchic Rhondda society was smashed, and until it is rebuilt, and for that matter rebuilt throughout Christendom, there will be no peace or happiness among men.

To Rhondda there first came the North Welshmen, the Cardiganshire folk known as 'Cardies', and the Pembrokeshire English and Welsh. With these came the Cornish, Cousin Jacks to the Welsh, who were immediately taken into the heart of the Rhondda folk, the 'free miners of the Forest of Dean' — brother Silurians who had for centuries lived in Gloucestershire, and the half-Welsh men from Hereford and Shropshire. Now all these were 'Celtic' but they had little else in common. Then there were the men from Somerset and Bristol, and the other Saxon English, most of whom came from Wessex. Ireland sent her Paddies, and Scotland her Gaels. Italy was represented by those of her sons and daughters whom Rhondda calls Bracchis; Jewry sent its children, and Rhondda illustrated that scripture where men are spoken of as coming from the east and the west and the north and the south. They came from China and from Africa and the South Seas, and even when depression seized all the South Wales mining valleys there came visitors from India — one remembers a

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great Maharajah and a Buddhist from the north-east — a Dane, Armenians, and of course the ubiquitous Americans.

The North Welsh, who are, as any South Welshman would tell you, a contrary lot who even talk Welsh backwards and speak through their noses, were eminently good miners. Raised in an agricultural or at least a pastoral land, they made up for their lack of technical skill by their ability to go on working when their more agile but less strong southern compatriots were tired out. In the days when mining was suited to an individualistic order, their own individualism (which had much to do with their political liberalism) helped them to become well off, but the traditional suspicion with which the southerners held them increased and became charged with an active dislike. The North Welshman is a fine fellow but he tends to be a lone wolf; the South Welshman is a fine fellow too but he appreciates the merits of the pack formation. And the idea of the pack prevailed. Thus the North Welshman has been ill rewarded for his superior endurance, and his distaste for trade unionism has been ill construed into an illicit love for the boss class.

The North Welsh were most sensitive over politics, but their concern was for such reforms as Disestablishment and Tithes. As the Marxists would probably say, they were petit bourgeoisie. They did not mind 'peistering' the bosses, and were the first to get the pick of the jobs. North Welshmen became firemen,

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overmen, timekeepers and under managers, and it is probable that some of them did appoint their North Welsh friends to the better jobs. This charge of favouritism has been repeated too often and with too great vehemence and evidence to be wholly groundless but the trouble is that the southerners were as bad.

Both the North Welsh and the Cardies are good business people and it was to be expected that they would be the Rhondda shopkeepers. As for the Cardies their character is complex enough. One Welsh sociologist holds that there are four different regions of Cardiganshire where are to be found four different types of people. The type which Rhondda is familiar with is the dour, hard-headed business and professional men who provide London with milkmen and accountants. The Cardies run to that type in Rhondda but it is a little difficult to understand why there exists such a powerful dislike of them among many of the Rhondda people. The Cardie is indeed a 'hard' man, but he is no more so than a Lowland Scot. As for the poor Pembroke 'pigs', as the Pembrokeshire people are called, they fall between two stools. They are considered as Welsh by the English and English of the English by the Welsh. The Cornish were treated by the other Welsh like long-lost relatives. 'Cousin Jack' came over to help erect the mines. He was a die sinker, a carpenter, and a mason. Many of the tin miners from Camborne and Redruth came to Rhondda to work in the coal mines, and with them came their rivals, the Devonians.

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The Somerset men and the Bristolians came to Rhondda to be miners but some of them stayed to be agitators. They were a hard-working, hard-drinking and powerful-speaking crowd and supplied Rhondda with that slogan-making demagogue, Mr. A. J. Cook, and with a group of men whose industrial history had given them a long memory of trade unionism.

The Irish were Rhondda's navvies. They were also Rhondda's publicans, boxers, and policemen, though they were by no means monopolists of these professions. Rhondda found them a rough but also a warm-hearted people who, once they had become your friends, would not relinquish that friendship. They were mostly devout Roman Catholics, or *plant Mari* (children of Mary) as Rhondda called them. They have helped considerably in the growth of Roman Catholicism throughout Rhondda and South Wales. They tend to have large families, and when they intermarry with Protestants, the children are brought up in what Melanchthon called 'the old religion'. Their co-religionists, the Italians, or the Bracchis, came to own cafés and ice-cream shops. Since the rise of Mussolini in Italy, and particularly when Mosley came to Tonypany, the poor Bracchi has had to face the unjustifiable charge of being a Fascist. The short-lived spate of high feeling against him has died down of late and the Bracchi feels able to breathe freely again.

The Scots in Rhondda form a special category with their rivals the Jews. Both seem to belong to the world,

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though the Scot has a fatherland. The Scot came to Rhondda as an engineer, a colliery owner, or to teach and practise medicine. Many of the Scots are in Cardiff where the Marquis of Bute lives in state. The humbler Scot was Rhondda's tallyman or packman, and through his agency many a Rhondda home was furnished with rugs, towels, clothes and pots and pans. The Jews vied with the Scots as packmen and tallymen, and as doctors. Some of them, however, were very poor. There is one Rhondda Jew, a glazier, who for all his many industrious and frugal years in Rhondda seems to be as poor as when he first came, and he is certainly no miser. Some have grown wealthy as jewellers, pawnbrokers, oculists, and bazaar keepers. There are few Jews in Rhondda compared with the number in most industrial areas. They are well known and by no means disliked. Anti-semitism is probably a Teutonic and Slavic tendency rather than a Celtic one. One curious matter relating to the Rhondda Jews is that they are not the dark and swarthy people one sees in England. The 'Jewish' features are far more likely to be found among some of the indigenous Rhondda folk, many of whom possess Jewish names like Emanuel, Moses, Absalom, Isaacs and Samuels, than among the reddish blondes who attend the synagogue at Pontypridd.

The Chinese came to wash Rhondda's clothes. They are still helping in this essential service, but there are not more than a score of Chinese families in the whole of Rhondda. Little groups of a marked kind are

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always important because they may be oligarchies, but there again the Chinese are innocent. They are a hard working, quiet, reserved, and law abiding people, and have many a laugh no doubt at talk about 'the Yellow Peril'. Some of them have married Welsh-women.

The Lascars and the Negroes came over from the great docks at Cardiff and Barry. They used to number a hundred or more in Rhondda, but they did not stay in Rhondda for long. Some would actually journey from Cardiff every day, work in the mines and then return home after their shifts. Sometimes one notices a Negro or a Lascar in the southern part of the Rhonda. Only too often they take more drink than they can hold and find themselves in the police courts, but their part in Rhondda life has been transitory.

When depression came upon Rhondda there was a steady exodus of men from her villages, but the arrival of distress brought a special class of immigrant to the middle of Rhondda. This was the philanthropist. Now many of the philanthropists were Quakers, and many of the Quakers came from London and from the North of England. But whatever part of the world they have come from they all seem to have caught what is called the Oxford Accent. Balliol is very properly represented at Trealaw at this moment, but it is very disconcerting to find in the very centre of a coal area a by no means poor group of men, hatless, trousered in uncreased and shabby flannel

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'bags', and with that strange air of unkemptness which goes with horn-rimmed spectacles, Fabianism, and a desire to help other folk through the instrument of 'the Settlement'. Their womenkind have much the same appearance. They, the philanthropists and Quakers, have done their work well in Rhondda, so that they will not object to one minor criticism. The Rhondda people have a strong impression that either the philanthropists are dressing shabbily in order to condescend towards the workers or else are 'showing off'. The workers only dress shabbily when they do not wish to harm their better clothes. You should see them on Sunday! On Sunday it is fairly possible to pick out a philanthropist from the great herd since he or she alone will be dressed in the sort of clothes reserved for Saturday afternoon rambling.

The Quakers have brought one fashion to Rhondda. That is the habit of going out of doors without a hat. The young Rhondda man or girl has begun to take to the practice, and a quite false impression has got about that Quakers do not wear hats. Quakers do not differ from other people in wearing hats, though it is notorious that they disagree about the reason for doffing them. But what has happened is quite simple. The Quakers, more than any other religious body, got badly bitten by the last craze for 'emancipation', and as a body tended to follow some of the vagaries of that nonsensical 'wind on the heath, brother' fad which implied sandals, vegetarianism, and dress reform. The Quakers like many other worthy people will

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follow any sort of movement if it is a 'reform' movement, and the peril of indiscriminate 'reform' is that the thing reformed will lose its original form, and therefore its existence.

Rhondda does not want a Reformation; Rhondda wants a conformation. Rhondda needs an integration of her still unresolved constituent parts. So dire is this need and so concerned is everyone about it that the descendants of the old Rhondda folk seem to have been forgotten. They, it would seem, ought to occupy a far more prominent place than they do. Few of them are more than comfortably off; very few are poor in the modern sense of being pauperized. They do not make up a large proportion of Rhondda's population; and they are not loud spoken. They are what they have always been, a quiet, simple, deeply religious but by no means over emotional people. They love music, they abominate socialism (they are natural Tories), they tend to be short in stature though there are strange exceptions, and they have a horror of 'charity'. The farmers on the hillsides belong to this good stock which Cobbett would have admired, and so do a quarter of the miners and a fair proportion of the schoolteachers. The Rhondda Welsh make good teachers in their district for they understand Wales and the Welsh, but they understand Rhondda and Rhondda Welsh better still.

Now although by the beginning of the twentieth century, Rhondda had just absorbed a Babel of nations, Rhondda did not become a Babel. By far

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the greatest number of immigrants were Welsh and Welsh speaking, and the arrival of the Cornish, the Irish and the Scots helped to maintain the Celtic supremacy. The coming of the English did not disturb the essentially Welsh base and fabric. The Welsh, like all the Celtic nations, have a power of assimilating foreigners and making them part of the social body. The English and the Scots of the Lowlands do not have this power. They are Empire Builders and they are aristocratic. An Indian official would probably treat a Hindu girl with great courtesy but he would not marry her, even if the strictures of her religion (which the Indian official tolerates) allowed her to marry out of caste. How differently the Iberian cousin of the Gwentian behaved when he conquered South America. He would build up his Empire in his own way. He would not tolerate two royalties in religion, or a dualism in race either. The Spanish soldier saw no harm in marrying one of the daughters of the Incas. The Welsh, like the Spanish, are one of the most intransigent of peoples. They did not like their land suddenly robbed of its beauty and crowded out with a motley crew of foreigners. But once that had happened, they did not throw up taboos about marrying the stranger within the gates, and there was no 'foreign quarter' or East End. It is difficult to know what the expert would make of all this. He might imagine that Rhondda was a thoroughly miscegenized community, but he would be very wide of the mark. The only element

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miscogenized life comes from the cinema, and the other imported amusements, and they are well enough known to people outside South Wales.

The present state of Rhondda's peoples is that they have already achieved sufficient integrity to resist cosmopolitanism. Their task is now to resist that enemy from within which would corrupt their nation by a base levelling spirit so utterly opposed to tradition and the vital claims of memory and taste. To build up Rhondda as part of that body politic, leaping and pulsating with its corporate life, is its future task.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHADOW OVER RHONDDA

RHONDDA in its days of quiet and unalloyed rural life had few industrial troubles to contend with. There were several minor outbreaks during the time of the Chartists, but for the most part rural Rhondda was well content. Indeed the period of the Corn Laws was one of prosperity for Rhondda, which being largely a corn growing valley had nothing to fear from high protection. More than that Rhondda positively rejoiced in the Corn Laws. To this day there are the marks high up the hillsides where the plough had gone in those days, for every available piece of earth came to be sown with wheat, barley and oats.

Then came relentlessly a life based on the rise of machinery and of power production pushing away that slower but natural life based on the land and on the seasons. With that new life which in a strange measure caught up the rhythm of the wheels and set men's lives to its unnerving measure, there came the inevitable reaction upon society. Men were set to mind machines; but machines came to mind men who, to their honour, rebelled. The industrial era brought with it two things which partake of the machine world — the strike and the lock-out. And perhaps the first and most typical in Rhondda was the strike of

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1873. Rhondda had had its coal mines for some thirty years before this, but they had been conducted on an older social principle than that of the fashionable *laissez-faire*. The strike of 1872 was one of the first of those industrial struggles which are so hard to solve since no one is clear whether they are strikes or lock-outs. It is quite clear that the miners asked for more wages, and it is quite clear that six months later in 1873, having been refused a wage increase, the men were threatened with a ten per cent deduction in their wages. The matter affected some 60,000 miners in South Wales, and the Rhondda was badly affected.

It is a strange contingency that industrial unrest in South Wales and Rhondda is often followed by religious revivals, and soon after the next strike, or lock-out, in 1875 when some 50,000 men in South Wales were affected, Moody and Sankey came to Rhondda, and established their tents in Tonypany. After the hauliers' strike in 1893, a strike caused, so some say, by a previous disturbance among the railwaymen, the military, or more strictly the militia, were called in. They marched through Pontypridd but they were not needed. The trouble flared out again five years later, the militia came out again, and a miners' agent was imprisoned for intimidation. Then came the diversion of the Boer War and the coronation of King Edward who was proclaimed from the steps of a Rhondda Nonconformist chapel. After these came Evan Roberts who laved Rhondda as he laved all Wales in a mighty religious stream.

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Three years later there was a rapid rise in wages and everything seemed set for a period of prosperity. In 1908 the Eight Hours Act came into operation and then paradoxically there strode hunger-marches into Pontypridd. The next year a coal crisis arose but was promptly settled, but a spirit of agitation was in the air and hardly was the dispute arranged when a great crowd of miners demonstrated at Pontypridd. Another agreement which was supposed to have ended the trouble was signed in April 1910, but there was no stopping what appeared later to be a general trend towards a long crisis in the whole industrial world.

When the Eight Hours Act came into force in 1908, instead of alleviating industrial unrest in the mining valleys, it merely inflamed it. The position was complicated by the dispute between the two wings of the Labour movement, those who were 'reformist' and those who had espoused the doctrinaire cause of socialism. The old Miners' Union was the battle ground of these opposing wings, and it soon became evident that the Miners' Union was about to discuss not merely the pros and cons of any Act of Parliament designed to help the mining industry but to argue the merits of a revolutionary change in the old system of private property.

The miners' grievances were worth investigating. The first was one of prices, especially for work in 'abnormal places', where stone and clay prevent the miner from hewing enough coal to make a fair return.

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This had already led to a strike at the Ely pit of the Cambrian company, and the other pits of that company had already given signs of 'sympathetic action'. In November 1910, all the pits of the Cambrian struck and the men from the Powell Duffryn at Aberdare came out in sympathy without giving any notice. Then came a letter which was written by the miners' leader, Mr. Stanton, to the colliery owners hinting at the possible peril to 'blacklegs' if they were to be employed during the strike. The unrest had only just begun. Allied causes, such as the presence of non-union miners, brought other collieries into the dispute. At Maesteg, just outside Rhondda, 5000 men struck, and just when a settlement had been arrived at, Stanton 'persuaded' them to go on with the strike, just as he 'persuaded' most of the men in the Aberdare valley to join in the strike.

These were preparations for a sudden rush of an industrial storm which never returned to Rhondda with quite the same sharpness and savagery. On November 7th, the Naval, Cambrian, and Britannic collieries, owned by the Cambrian company, were stormed by the strikers, who put out the fires and stopped the engines. At Clydach, the strikers 'frog-marched' the stokers out of the yard to their homes, and menaced the officials who took refuge in the power station which was then bombarded with stones so that all its windows were broken. In the darkness the officials escaped. But this merely aroused the fury of the strikers who had become an enraged mob. The

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next day at four in the morning, the pickets began their policy of 'peaceful persuasion'. They paraded in force throughout the Rhondda and stopped the enginemmen and stokers from resuming work. At mid-day Rhondda had become sullen, angry and invested with a sort of martial spirit, and to quell it, two hundred infantry and the same number of cavalry set out from Salisbury Plain, and large detachments of police were sent for from all parts of Glamorgan, and from Bristol.

Meanwhile the Federation Executive were in session at Cardiff reviewing the situation in the Aberdare valley where a truce had lasted for a day. The session also was concerned with a number of proposals from a group of men from the Powell Duffryn collieries, the chief proposal being that a Coalfield Conference should be summoned and a ballot taken on the question of an entire stoppage in the coalfields. But, as several of the council reminded the assembly, a ballot had been held in September on this very matter, and the proposal had been decisively rejected by over 30,000, a two to one rejection. The matter was therefore delayed, and eventually put before the South Wales Conciliation Board.

This rebuff infuriated the strikers. The same day towards the evening the mob came up against the police who charged again and again. Late in the evening there were over a hundred casualties, and all the local surgeries were filled with the wounded. The centre of the disturbances was at Llwynypïa.

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with a secondary centre at Tonypandy. At the former place a band of young men were charged by the police who in dispersing them left six injured. At night these young men having recovered from their injuries had inflamed their companions who surged up to Tonypandy Square and the Trealar bridge towards the evening. Their hands filled with stones, the men attacked the police and again smashed the windows of the power station. Then forming into procession they marched through the streets of Tonypandy smashing the windows of the traders and taking what they could lay their hands on. During Tuesday night, two squadrons of the 18th Hussars arrived at Cardiff from Tidworth, while companies of infantry remained at Swindon in case of need.

The next morning a troop of the Hussars came to Pontypridd, but this enraged the mob to the point of madness. Armed with staves, it rushed to Tonypandy station to meet the soldiery, and on its way it seemed like a mighty torrent swelling the narrow streets. It was no place for the inoffensive, but mobs always have their audience, and at Tonypandy most of that audience found its way into the surgeries. By the time the mob had reached the station, most of the shops in Tonypandy between the Square and the bridge were looted, and some were gutted. After battering the front of a shop belonging to Mr. Pascoe Jenkins, a Justice of the Peace, there was no holding the mob. The traders were terror-stricken; and some were injured. And a few days after, the mob found itself

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obliged to depend on those very traders for the necessaries of life.

Some of the actions of the rioters were exceedingly serious. At Gilfach, a bugle summoned them to an attack on the Britannic colliery, and an attempt was made to explode the steam boilers by rolling down boulders from the hillside. At Trealaw the rioters attacked a colliery manager's house, and at Aberaman — outside Rhondda — showers of stones were thrown on a passenger train, injuring a lady and a local showman, who nearly lost his eyesight through some glass entering his eye. At Ystrad revolvers were used, and a colliery cashier nearly lost his life while sleeping. It was estimated that some thirty-three outrages of a serious kind occurred during the next fortnight, and on November 21st the rioting which appeared to be dying down reawoke. Tonypany railway station was rushed, and from eight to ten in the evening there was very severe fighting, and the military were called in. There was, however, only one direct death. The unsuccessful attempt to seize the Glamorgan colliery at Llwynypia led to the death of one, Samuel Royes, who died in a mêlée through being struck with a club.

The rioting affected Pontypridd which became like an armed town. Thence marched great crowds of strikers who came to 'demonstrate' against the police who had arrested certain miners who it was alleged had intimidated other miners at Gilfach Goch. Tuesday, the sixth day of the hearing, was the

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culminating day of a series of processions in which demonstrations had taken place outside the police court. Headed by a flute band more than 600 strikers marched to Pontypridd to meet a solid phalanx of police and a cohort of Hussars.

A long time passed by before anything like peace came to Rhondda. The next year did not help matters. And a suggestion by the Miners' Federation in April 1911 that arbitration should be used in the strike was upset by a violent speech by Vernon Hartshorn on May Day on Pontypridd Common. Then came a silly hoax. The Pontypridd town crier — strange how a traditional office and figure project into an industrial age — acting on the instructions of an unknown person, called together a mass meeting of workmen whose tempers were not improved when they at length found that they had been fooled. On May 10th eight men appeared before the Pontypridd justices for their part in the riots. Thus the wretchedness dragged on. It was no wonder that there was a recrudescence of rioting in Tonypany and district so soon after at the end of July, and a railway strike which although it took but two days to settle was a straw in the wind.

The protracted hearing of the indicted men at length reached some sort of conclusion. Three men were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and of a sudden the clamour died down. Other matters, chiefly the problem of the Church of England in Wales, began to attract the attention of Rhondda,

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and soon after some 60,000 people assembled in Cardiff to demonstrate against disestablishment. But a more serious if less explosive struggle was at hand.

In November 1911 a conference of delegates of the Miners' Federation met in London to discuss the question of the minimum wage, and the chief point of the conference soon became clear. It was simply whether the weapon of the strike should be used to secure this minimum wage. After several adjournments in January 1912, the matter was put to the vote and the result was:

For a strike	445,801
Against	115,921

The majority far exceeded the necessary two to one majority without which no decision thus arrived at could be implemented, and the next day notices were handed in throughout the coalfields where the writ of the miners' oligarchy ran. Meanwhile every effort was made by the politicians to stop the strike. The last day of grace, February 27th, passed by without any signs of relief, although two days later the Prime Minister promised the miners' delegates to introduce legislation to make the payment of a minimum wage compulsory. The difficulty in coming rapidly to some amicable settlement lay in the refusal of the Scottish and the South Wales owners to negotiate. At this stage a hint was dropped that certain of the Rhondda mines might be taken over by the State in order to supply the Navy. This aroused the Conservative

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Opposition in Parliament who declared the Government to be about to introduce socialism.

The great stoppage began in earnest in March. It affected not merely the coal mines but the tin plate industry, the railway services which were seriously curtailed, and the tradesmen. Rhondda presented an appearance of desolation which was hardly less pitiable than the misery of the Great General Strike. Tens of thousands of railwaymen, dockers, iron and steel workers were thrown out of employment in South Wales, and paralysis set in. Strangely enough there were very few violent scenes, and rioting, such a prominent feature of 1910, was unknown. One reason for the lack of visible unrest was that the men were being slowly starved, and had lost much of their spirit. There are two kinds of revolutionary resistances. The first is violent, sharp, and comparatively short; the second is apparently quiescent, vague, and prolonged. They are both elements in the whole revolution, but it is a pity that the former alone seems to be noticed. The 1911-12 stoppage affected Rhondda far more than the Tonypandy riots, but it has not had the same publicity. The only people who observed the industrial struggles of these islands at that time were the Germans who argued most fallaciously that the nation-wide strike demonstrated the disintegration of national unity. But the strike fever spread not only to France but to Germany itself.

At last Mr. Asquith introduced the Minimum Wage Bill. But the Bill was not acceptable to the miners'

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leaders owing to an omission of any schedules of wages. After emotional scenes in the House of Commons, when Mr. Asquith broke into tears, the Bill passed its final reading, and at noon on March 28th it was placed on the Statute Book. Following this the executive council of the Miners' Federation advised the men to return to work. The first vote showed that there was a definite majority against resumption, but another vote taken two days later went the opposite way, and on April 10th some sort of start was made in the Rhondda pits. The next day almost a full complement of men — some 12,000 men — resumed their work in the Cambrian and the Ocean collieries.

In a week Rhondda and South Wales was hard at work once more, and only just in time, for something more terrible than the 'rattling of a million workers' chains' was soon to menace the peace of Europe. Mr. Vernon Hartshorn's speech at Maesteg just before the great strike was more prophetic than he knew. Then he said that 'a million workers will rattle their chains and will declare with one voice that they will not be slaves, but claim the right to be treated as free men. The danger zone is being entered . . . The watch dogs of democracy must keep their eyes and ears open and be on their guard'. He thought only of a civil war in industry. But those words had a more exact reference to Britain's resistance to prussianism. And when the call came Rhondda forgot its private feuds and for four years saw with clearer eyes and with

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a greater understanding the value of that thing which is not given for goods or for gear.

But the Great War only shelved the industrial unrest in Rhondda and for that matter throughout the world. It seems that the moment that that war ended the first mutterings of that great agitation which produced the General Strike were heard. And now that has ended and given place to an intense depression something very much bigger and magnanimous than the pedlared cure-alls of the politicians must move the hearts of men before any real renovation can begin. We have not yet arrived at that crisis in history which Marx either ignored or knew nothing of, that time of emotional and spiritual darkness when physical force and armed strife fail as the movements of men in their dreams. But that time will come, and when it does, and when it is accompanied by a nation-wide asceticism and willingness to suffer, and when one man is willing to die for the people, then the night will pass away, and with it the terrors and destructions of an ephemeral industrial system which has enfeoffed masses of the people, and taken from them the words of life.

The Great War was cruel to Rhondda. It created a sudden demand for steam coal which Rhondda has more of than any other mining valley. Rhondda miners were working hard and they had neither the time nor the desire to agitate for less hours or more wages. But the war ended, and Rhondda found that the ships of the King's Navy did not want very

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much steam coal. After a short period of illusory prosperity, the export trade began to collapse. And in June 1925 the owners gave notice to end the old wage agreements which were well enough for the war days but could not be paid in the peace. Mining is a hazardous occupation; the South Wales coalfield, where the hard almost anthracite-like coal is not accompanied with so much gas as in pits elsewhere, is no less dangerous to the men. Rhondda had already had several earth tremors and these provided the men with some justification for a wage which should normally include 'danger money'. The miners therefore refused the owners' demands.

There were demagogues in those days. Many of them were the miners' leaders. But many more were in command of that whiggish oligarchy, the Trade Union Movement. In correct whiggish style — a style which goes back to the Great Revolution Families — these oligarchs made use of a popular outcry to subserve their own ends, and they courted the people with the same flattering addresses as Whigs all down the ages have done.

Then that oligarchy thought fit to do what all oligarchies are tempted to do — fight government. The men who led the people into a General Strike over the demands of the miners behaved neither with aristocratic discernment nor with democratic intention. They made a big blunder as most of them know now. But then they thought that they, the trade union bosses, were in the way of becoming Commissars,

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and then-a-day, before Stalin's 'liquidation' of his many trusted Commissars, to be a Commissar was something better than being a Duke. Stanley Baldwin had the measure of these neo-Whigs when he said, 'Let me say that no minority in this country has ever coerced the whole community'.

Then came the report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Mines. The Government promised to do what it could to make the report work, but the demagogues answered the Government with slogans, and on May 3rd, 1926 the General Strike was called.

Rhondda was just part of this nation-wide problem. It suffered the demagoguery of men like Mr. A. J. Cook, and it suffered far, far more than most parts of the country. The General Strike lasted only nine days. The coal strike dragged on for months, and all this while Rhondda fell lower and lower into the jaws of famine. Long before the great depression of 1930, Rhondda was a valley where men were starving, and a valley to which the eyes of the whole country were turned. The Guardians did their best to help the unfortunate, and gave a ten-shilling food ticket to each family in need. The evil of unemployment reached its climax that year and the next when it was estimated that in Mid-Rhondda some eighty per cent of the people were living on unemployment insurance, public assistance, or on the old age pension.

The Lord Mayor opened a fund for Rhondda and for other places which had been similarly struck with such misfortune. The Quakers, ever on the look out

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for social service, went down to Rhondda in 1926, and the Salvation Army and kindred organizations, Toc H and many other philanthropic bodies hastened to the stricken valley. And the Communists welcomed the misery as revivalists welcome the misery of sinners. There was little rioting. Tonypany did not live up to its nickname, Tonypandymonium. No. Rhondda became a wasted and a fatigued place. Virtue had gone out of Rhondda since 1910.

The years of grave crisis when the country almost became bankrupt hardly affected Rhondda, except to delay all prospect of recovery. Then came the Means Test. It did not apply to Rhondda until 1935, but its operation aroused something of the insurrectionary spirit of the Rhondda people. They would bear depression, starvation, and suffering, but they would not countenance any interference with the primary unit of their society, the family. Now the Means Test is about as controversial a subject as can be thought of. And like all controversies which intimately affect the common people, it is encumbered about with a mass of verbiage and rubbishy argument. There emerge two main arguments, the first for the necessity of the Means Test as a temporary measure, and the second for its maintenance for perpetuity. And there is one overpowering argument for its removal.

The history of the Means Test does not redound to the credit of the Labour Oligarchs. To begin with the socialist mind is quite in keeping with the proposition

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that a test should be imposed in order to maintain a person in society. In the Marxist progression towards a state of things which the various schools of Marxists are not agreed upon, there is the stage where the operative slogan is 'From each according to his capacity for work, and to each according to his work', and the final stage where the slogan is 'From each according to his capacity and to each according to *his need*'. What is that but a Means Test? And as Karl Marx, wherever he is, would admit, he fully realized that the old family relations which he said the bourgeoisie were trying to break, were not relations he was trying to keep. So when men hear of Communist agitation against the Means Test, they do well to remember that the Communists are merely the latest accession to the pedigree of the Whigs who are ready to take up any popular outcry (democracy is their latest) in order to achieve power.

Then there is the Fabian type of Labourite. A man possessed of that fiendish desire for looking after men as if they were hardly children but sociological phenomena has little bowels of human compassion left wherewith to denounce a test so much in keeping with his own sociological principles. The Liberal has a legitimate objection to a Means Test, but if he were consistent he ought not to tolerate any interference with the free working out of his beloved Benthamism. The reason for the arrival of the Means Test was simply that something had to be done for starving men and their families. Social charity demanded just that.

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The Means Test was initiated by a Conservative Government which had some innate sense of Toryism. The pity is that it had not more.

It was a just thing to care for men who were in bodily peril. But it was unjust to pry into their privacy. It is one thing to pry into the privacy of a man who has money in order to tax him. That sort of man can well afford to bear inspection even though it is irritating. The poor, as Disraeli said, have a right to demand from society the wherewithal to live freely, and dutifully. There is an occasional sneer at the feudal system but if the principles of feudalism had been applied in the working out of the Means Test the clamour would never have arisen. A grave mistake was made in thinking that the unhappy poor would stand inspection if they could get money. It would have been better to have given them their right to maintenance on a lower scale and to have respected their privacy. No one in authority seems to understand, certainly the bulk of the middle-class leaders of the Labour, Liberal, and Communist parties does not understand, that the poor are far more sensitive to their condition and status than are other sections of the community. The poor are indeed another nation; they have their own social life, their own scale in the moral order, in which generosity is rated higher than thrift, and they are in a special sense a secret society whose symbols are borrowed saucepans and sugar.

The Means Test was wrongly applied because no

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one knew anything about the people who were going to be tested. Rhondda to its good name reacted violently to the Test. There were big marchings, and meetings of protest. And there were small riots. The feeling against the Means Test is still very strong, and the finest thing that could happen to Rhondda would be the deletion of the Means Test from the Statute Book.

A poem appeared in one of the Rhondda newspapers which well illustrates the Rhondda working-class mind to all that sort of thing summed up by the Dole. It is worth while quoting, for it is written in the Rhondda dialect of Welsh:

SHONI AR Y DOL

Hen fachan piwr yw Shoni,
Heb ronyn o'r 'Gwelwch ch'i fi?'
Pleser ca'l awr yn ei gwmpni
Mai fanars a'i dafod mor flri.
Os prin a chalad ei grwstyn
Os gwael yw ei wisg a'i wedd,
Mae 'nghalon o hiwmor a hedd.

Gwir fod ei scitsha yn llapra
A'i got yn mynd dicyn yn llwyd;
Mae arian y dol yn gwtā
I' Shoni ga'l dillad a bwyd;
Er hynny nid yw yn cwyno
A cretwch chi fi ne bido
Ma' Shoni fil gwell na'i lun.

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Tr'eni gweld bachan fel Shoni
Yn bascan twyr dwr a'r baw
I'r 'Public Assistance Committee'
Fel bacar a'i gap yn 'i law,
I ofyn am ran cardotyn
Neu 'lusan sy'n gatal hen graith;
Nid cardod ma' Shoni yn 'mofyn,
Ond cysur a dicon o waith.

Mi â ambell waith i'r capal
Nenwetig i'r Cwidda Mawr;
Eistedda ar ben yr orial
Ni welir ef byth ar y llawr
Fe lynca yn flasus bob sylw
Gwrandawa mor sobor a sant
I'w lycad daw deigyn gloyw
Pan gofia am Mari a'r plant.

Tr'ulodd ei einioes yn ddyfal
Dan faich o ofalon trwm
Prin 'dd y g'in'og yn amal
I gynnal ei deulu llwm
Ond baich ei weddi i mwranta
Pan yn gatal y byd ar ol
Fydd cwrdd a hen saint Cwm Rhondda
Mewn gwlad heb un Parish na Dol.

Here is a fairly close translation:

JOHNNY ON THE DOLE

A dear old chap is Johnny with none of that 'Look at me' swagger. It is a pleasure to be in his company

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for his manners and his bearing are easy. If his crust is hard to get and stale at that, if his clothing and his appearance are poor, his heart and good temper are at peace. True, his boots are all to pieces, and his coat is becoming greenish grey; and his dole money is not enough to provide him with clothing and food; yet despite that he never complains, and, believe me or not, Johnny's better off in some ways than would appear. It's a pity to see a boy like Johnny trudging through the dirt and the rain to the Public Assistance Committee like a beggar cap in hand in order to get a beggar's pittance — some of that sort of 'charity' which leaves a scar. It isn't alms he wants, but comfort and plenty of work. When he goes from home to the chapel, especially to the Big Meetings, he sits up at the top by the clock. You never see him downstairs. He absorbs each sentence (of the parson), and two tears come to his eyes as he thinks of his Mary and children at home. He has spent his whole life in plodding along under loads of heavy cares, particularly when the pennies have been scarce, in order to keep his little family, but the burden of his prayer I warrant is that when he is leaving this world behind it will be to meet those old saints of Rhondda in a land beyond parish relief and the dole.

Is Johnny a victim of religious dope? Religion which merely ignores the body and the social order is certainly not the Christian religion. When Marx was indicting religion by which he chiefly meant the

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Christian religion, the influence of an other-worldly puritanism was triumphant. The Christian can afford, however, to risk the censure of the Marxist by caring for heaven, for the heaven of Johnny is a much more real thing than the fantasies which lie at the back of long periods of Marxist 'Social Titanism'. And Johnny's spirit is part of the authentic spirit of Rhondda, and what his soul yearns after is far more likely to be what is good for Rhondda than the hag-ridden dreams of Marx. At the same time those who love Shonj for caring for a paradise above must not leave him comfortless here.

'God', wrote Dante in his *De Monarchia*, 'has set before men two objects at which to aim; the blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of his own natural powers and is prefigured by the earthly paradise, and the blessedness of eternal life which consists, in the fruition of God's Countenance . . . and this blessedness is known as the Heavenly Paradise.' We are still far from home, but we are at liberty to find the way which is given not only to the great and the powerful but to Johnny and his company.

CHAPTER V

RED RHONDDA

It is a favouritely held myth that tells of Wales' traditional Radicalism. Wales was once a stronghold of Toryism; it defended Charles against Cromwell and the first Whigs; it was certainly Tory before the great Reform Bill delivered the country to the bourgeoisie; and the Annual Register shows that Wales still returned a fair muster of Tories during the nineteenth century.

Riots, such as the Rebecca Riots, were due to a reassertment of local traditions in regard to such thoroughly Tory institutions as turnpikes. The Reform Bill riots at Newport must be considered with due regard to the Newport people's claims — in spite of their accent — to be English.* The Chartist Riots affected certain parts of Glamorganshire, but Chartism was an anti-Whig rather than an anti-Tory movement, was led by Tories like Burdett and was supported by Disraeli.

The old Rhondda folk were probably Tory; the North Welsh were Liberals with Nonconformist consciences; and the remaining Welsh were drawn pretty equally to all the political parties. What may be called Radical-Socialism came with the Bristolians and the Somersetians, who introduced the embryonic

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form of that struggle now so familiar between unreal blocs of interests. They helped to introduce trade unionism into Rhondda; they were class-conscious descendants of a neo-whiggish tradition; they did not care for the death of capitalism, but were the reformists Marx hated so much.

The industrialized life of Rhondda soon produced the almost inevitable rebellions known as strikes, which flared up in Tonypandy's little war, which so unjustly gave Tonypandy the name of Tonypandy-monium, and the great coal strike which was nationwide. By this time, Rhondda had become a byword for Red Politics. Maerdy became known as little Moscow, and London philanthropists returned thence with the feeling that they had risked their lives. All this is of course a piece of romantic fantasy. Maerdy never was anything like a little Moscow, and Rhondda, although it had formed no tradition of conservation and restraint, was still naturally conservative. It is true that the population had rushed to the valley to work and get as much money as it could and as quickly as possible, and it revolted in ugly fashion when it found it could not get rich quick, but rather was becoming pauperized. But this initiative which sent so many thousands to Rhondda was a middle-class thirst for money and all that money could buy. Essentially Rhondda was built up on bourgeois ethics, and its chief political party was that thoroughly bourgeois institution, the Labour Party. In 1911 Rhondda had a vigorous Labour Party, some time after

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its leading Labour man, 'Mabon', had led it like a sort of local Moses. Fabianism had sent its delaying generals to Rhondda some years before, and Fabian tracts in Welsh had been pushed through Rhondda cottage doors. Socialism grew fairly rapidly before the war, all over the world, particularly in those countries which have little peasantry. Industrial capitalism of the Liberal tradition always ends in industrial unrest, and in the general anarchy which *laissez faire* brings, it is no wonder that despairing people turn to socialism. Rhondda followed the example of all over-industrialized places, and just before the war it was a little more socialistic than it is now.

The war temporarily stopped all that. There were in Rhondda a few pacifists who were really perverted militarists. They found their vocation. There were thousands of ordinary men who fought for their country. Others were formed into a service corps which behaved very militantly on one occasion. It was under the command of Colonel Dai Watts-Morgan (then Labour M.P. for Rhondda) and besides rendering its duty of digging trenches in Flanders, it suddenly changed its digging implements to the weapons of war.

A sudden charge from the enemy provoked the colonel to order his Rhondda navvies to the counter attack, and grasping their pickaxes they obeyed and drove the Germans back beyond their starting point.

The Great War meant an ephemeral prosperity but peace brought back again the old industrial

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struggle. The aftermath of war brings that sort of thing inevitably, and in rapid succession there followed cancellation of orders from abroad, cancellation of war time wage agreements, arguments over subsidies, and then over hours. That stubborn west country radical A. J. Cook then precipitated the slogan, and then it meant war to the death. All that we have seen.

It was at this time that communism began to be feared over the whole country. The publication of the Zinoviev letter (which now looks as if it might have been genuine enough, but which was widely thought a forgery), the raids on Arcos, and the creepy stories of Russian Gold produced a feeling among the British that the Russians were fomenting disorder in order to prepare for a revolt.

There may have been some truth in all this, but communism does not take hold of healthy men and healthy societies. Communism may be infected into Bloomsbury intellectuals and the ruffians of Barcelona, but so long as there remains a fair amount of inherited political and social good taste and good health, communism can make no progress. But Rhondda's morale was terribly lowered by the events which culminated in the General Strike and the last world wide economic depression.

Two awful evils had befallen her. She had lost her primeval beauty, and she had now lost her industrial wealth which she had accepted as the price of her virgin violation. The miners' incomes dwindled away;

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and as they did so, so did the incomes of the shopkeepers. Credit was given of course — credit which could not long continue since the shopkeeper was almost bankrupt himself. Quiet grew the shopping streets of Rhondda; the shops grew bare; the windows were whitewashed and away went their tenants. Meanwhile the passions of an angry and forsaken people rose high. Philanthropy, the restoration of a certain higher level of prosperity, and the fine work of social workers have hardly touched the profoundly evil neurosis which the strike and the depression have caused. It seems as if this wound in the soul of Rhondda can only be cured by a return of Christianity and a Christianity which cares for the psychological values of work and the pathos of the day labourer. The Rhondda communist thinks otherwise, but yet he is a fine example of the stripping and laceration of men's souls since the war. All this must be said, but never must it be said to detract from the work of good men who came to Rhondda to seek the good of Rhondda. Many know how valuable have been the works of the Master of Balliol, Henry Brooke, a Conservative research worker, and of those at Maes-yr-Hâf. All these symbolized that sense of solidarity in the poignancies and sufferings of the Rhondda people. They left behind their forensic precision and party politics to consider men and works of mercy. But yet the communist heresy grew. It grew in spite of the Liberal shopkeepers, the philanthropists, the reformist trade unionists, and fine and deeply respected

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Rhondda Tories such as Mr. Gwilym Rowlands, now M.P. for Flint, a man from the old Rhondda stock, an expert in the coal industry whose advice is given freely and kindly to all who need it.

Labour has been a thin sort of bridge to the communist movement. But it has been almost a one-way bridge. Men pass into the Communist Party from the Labour Party, but if they return to the Labour Party, the communists will have no second repentance. And for local reasons there are quite a number of communists at heart inside the Labour Party. They keep within that party because it is useful. The Labour Party in Rhondda is a gigantic bluff. If there could be a ballot in the whole of Rhondda to decide the numbers of those who were 'Labour' or 'not Labour', the latter would win.

For many years the Left Book Club, and other Left cultural stunts have been very active in Rhondda, and that mugwump affair, the *Hibbert Journal* has a curiously high sale among the miners. The cultural front has all the evidences of a struggle. The whiggishness of trade union labour incites communism, as Lord John Russell incited chartism, and the reaction from an abounding bourgeois ethics is proletarian ethics.

The Labour Party in Rhondda seems to have all the worst characteristics of the middle class without any of the finer ones. There is no aristocracy, and thus social democracy cannot be expected to work. It can only work in a community properly proportioned. In different words these criticisms of the Rhondda Labour

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Party may be heard even from the communists. One of them speaking by the Central Hall said, 'Once upon a time when Sir ——— walked towards you, you would be ready to take off your hat, and bob and bow, and say, "Good day, Sir ———". And then when he went bankrupt you would flunkey the colliery manager. To-day when Mr. ———, the man who pretends to be the workers' leader, passes by, you smirk and you get ready to take off your cap and say, "Good day, Mr. ———". And you know he's no better than the colliery manager, and a damn sight worse than the old squire.'

In a Rhondda pub a year ago a communist was debating fiercely with an opponent, and turned to a stranger for comment. The stranger replied, 'Well, man, I can't be expected to agree with you or him. I'm a Tory'. The communist seemed to gasp, but as the man was a stranger and since the Rhondda communist is a gentleman, he recovered himself and put another question. 'Tell me then, mon, what sort of a damned Tory are you? Are you one of those tradesmen Tories, or are you like the old Tory squires we had here once?'

'Yes, I think I see what you mean,' answered the stranger. 'No, I don't think I like trade very much, because I can't look after my own change, let alone looking after customers! I'm a Tory because I care for the people of Rhondda before I care for the Capitalist System, and before I care for the Grand Moguls of the Labour Party, and before I care for the

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crowds of books you communists clutter yourselves up with.'

'I don't read the — things,' answered the local firebrand. 'But tell me now, what do you think of the Labour Party here?'

'Well,' answered the stranger diffidently for it was his duty to be polite, 'I think they are the wrong leaders for Rhondda. What Rhondda ought to have had long ago and what she wants now are a few of the old Rhondda Tories, such as —' — and he mentioned a name — 'who would lead the people.'

. To his surprise the Labour man and the communist and a few other listeners agreed.

Yet in spite of the fact that many a Rhondda communist is a Tory on the razzle, it would not do to hide the existence of Rhondda communists who are Marxists. Many Rhondda communists go to chapel and I have listened to one quite reasonable defence of this action.

'It is perfectly true', said a young Rhondda communist to me in a Cardiff café, 'that religion, especially Rhondda religion, is dope. It is perfectly true that it takes the mind of the worker *and his wife and children* away from the struggle against capitalism and imperialism, and pulpit rhetoric is the deadly enemy of class militancy. But the workers of Rhondda built the Rhondda chapels and they are their's for them to use for their proletarian ends. The communist is perfectly justified at this stage in attending chapel particularly as it tends to remove the slur cast upon him as an

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immoral person. What you have to remember is that chapel contains within it the seeds of its own destruction, and we have to nurture these seeds. We communists do not want the chapel to be abolished quite in the same way as the bourgeoisie think, but we are aiming at utilizing its forces and its cultural and emotional content.'

This is a Marxist variety of Julian Huxley's *Religion Without Revelation*. Instead of ordering the religious spirit to a reverence for science, it is to be ordered to the class war. It conveys a pretty picture of Carmel draped with red banners, of Bethel emblazoned with the hammer and the sickle, and of communist clergymen indulging in the *hwyl*, the while they pursue their dialectical course.

One of the most convenient weapons the Marxist has is this blessed word 'dialectic'. So long as the Marxist can succeed in getting people to believe that everything has in it the seeds of its own destruction — as if there were nothing done at a given time that could not be done well and completely — so long will this poison continue to undermine unhappy men such as those of Rhondda. The word permits the Marxist to belong to a bourgeois pacifist society, a quasi-bourgeois trade union or a High Tory club. This vulgarized version of Dietzgen's *Positive Outcome* allows every bourgeois and time-lag institution to be used for the Marxist's purpose. The 'seeds of death' business is terribly overworked. It is chiefly wrong as a doctrine, since if it were true it would itself contain the seeds of

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its own destruction. If nothing existing has perfection in accordance with its nature, if the whole of life is one unsteady and perpetual flux, one continual ebb and flow in a dull level of nature, then nothing is certain, and no one has right to be optimistic or pessimistic about the future, or even to consider the future as worth enjoying or worth suffering. That a thing has Being and that it has potentiality is very sound doctrine and good common sense. But Aristotle's dictum that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time is a doctrine poles apart from this wretched Marxist thinking that sees a necessary impermanence in the societies of men. The Rhondda Marxist is the product of an industrialist social order, which is itself guilty of denying social permanence. The whole spirit is romantic, and thus romanticism is at the back of Marxism. The Marxist is romantic in trying to teach nomads the uses of soap and the advantages of sanitation and socialism. The Marxist is romantic in his overweening and pathetic love for machinery. He looks at a tractor as a boy looks at a clockwork train, though the boy knows at heart it is only a toy.

Marxist dialectical materialism is a contradiction in terms, and no amount of philosophical flying buttresses can support it for long. Inevitably the 'general line' sends the Marxists slipping to one side or the other as the pirate's plank sent its mutineers, and heretical Marxists and mutinous pirates are both liquidated.

But while Marxism riots in false antitheses, materialism against idealism for instance, the average Rhondda

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communist knows little of the party 'general line'. He is, or feels himself to be, oppressed, and he is suffering in 'democratic countries' from a form of 'literary' liberty which burkes the whole question of real liberty. In South Wales, many hundred years ago, were 'serf villages' consisting entirely of slaves. When the priest and the church came to one of these villages, however, all the serfs were freed. Christianity's office was clear; it gave freedom to slaves. With a retreat of Christianity goes the retreat of freedom. Advancing come sham freedoms — paper democracies built up on a wretched paganism — and men are again becoming enfeoffed. Unhappy Rhondda communist who thinks communism will free him. Pitiful hallucination. No longer will he be the free and lawful man who has charge of himself. He will be bound against his own freedom, against his inalienable right to rebel — a right which softens the grossness and hardness of the red vandalism of the world — and he will forfeit all his claims to the possession of his self.

Perhaps the most fitting commentary that could be passed on Rhondda revolutionary activity are these words of Disraeli:

'We ought to inquire into the causes of the insurrectionary spirit and find out whether the conduct of government is concerned in that insurrectionary spirit.'

CHAPTER VI

THE HOME LIFE OF RHONDDA

THE visitor to Rhondda, used even in industrial wens to variations in the buildings, often comments on the sameness of the Rhondda houses. He probably notices the lack of any stately buildings, or tall ones, sees hardly a factory, and very few chimney stacks. Only the superstructure of the collieries rises above the uniformity of the strings of cottages. That is a first impression and by no means an accurate one. But it is quite true that Rhondda has plenty of two-storied houses, and tenements are practically unknown. Except for a few churches, such as the Methodist Central Hall, and of course the finely built hospitals, Rhondda is a mass of small houses and cottages.

But if one approaches those cottages more closely one begins to see the striving of the people after individuality. To begin with the houses of the better off are of red brick, and the rest are mostly of the local greyish stone quarried from the mountainside and often whitewashed. The few big houses have cemented or composition fronts, and the chapels are of the same material as the mass of the houses.

Walking down a street lying parallel with the mountainside one notices that on one side the doors of the houses are level with the pavement, while the

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houses on the other are approached by six or seven steps. Sometimes a quite short street contains compact groups of houses which support three different social classes, the miner, the bourgeois (school teacher, journalist, clerk), and the employer, the doctor, and the wealthier members of the professional classes. It takes some time to notice these distinctions, but they are well known to the people in the street.

The better off have front gardens, but many of the houses of miners have front gardens too. The status of the householder is, however, often given away by the 'genteel' monkey puzzle tree which grows in the front garden. As one passes by the little houses, one notices that many of them have bills in the front window announcing petty eisteddfodau, church anniversary services, or revival services. There cannot be anywhere outside South Wales such enthusiasm to stick bills in front windows as there is in Rhondda. What effect they have it is hard to tell for the member of Carmel is not likely to be interested in Bethel's affairs, unless he conceives of Bethel as a musical rival, and is probably too full of Carmel's forthcoming bun scramble to worry over a Baptist three-day convention. But the bill is rather a sign to the world that within the walls of that house there is a family which cares for something more than mere existence. Rhondda fights hard for its values of life and the citadel of its army is within the little stone cottages.

The Rhondda family is a much more self-contained

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affair than the English. The structure of Rhondda life has much to do with this. The main task of the Rhondda folk is hard work, and there is pretty little time to develop that pernicious ennui that in pampered and lazy communities helps to break up the family. Marriage, to begin with, though it comes to most Rhondda people after a precious time of courtship, is not a long honeymoon. That time of almost perilous pleasure has to be surmounted, for most Rhondda people do not get paid for holidays and work begins early in the morning for those who do work. Rhondda people who have no pretensions to a strict moral code are often horrified by their view of London life, which they understand to be a series of orgies and prodigal extravagance. In Rhondda, amusements and recreations are cared for by those who have struggled hard to possess them. They are the carefully saved up tithe of their labour. That is why they care for them so dearly. And they begin to care for them in the back parlour, and the kitchen.

There is the preliminary rehearsal for the concert. There is the seat of pain and hard study which has its fruit in the following kind of press notice, 'Cwmparc Boy Heads List'. Mr. Lewis Jones, the author of *Cwmardy*, owes, as he admits, almost everything to his grandmother who looked after him as a baby at her little cottage in Clydach. The Rhondda home has an advantage over others in that there is seldom more than one family living in the same house. Rhondda

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people have hardly heard of, much less experienced, the house which is really a flat. A Rhondda home, however small, has at least four rooms and its back garden and its own front door and walls which separate it from the best of neighbours.

In Rhondda's early corporate life as a mining valley, what are now known as 'the essential services' were not facile services as they are to-day. Lighting was by tallow candles, or 'dips' as they were called. The 'composite' came later and was supposed to be cleaner, and did not have to have the wick cut so often. The tallow candles were sold and stored in bunches of a dozen or more, hung in pairs or tied together, and when one was cut the next was loosened. They had the appearance of pale sausages and they smelt like burnt mutton when they were snuffed. Then came oil lamps which were foul smelling contrivances. If they were upset while alight, a fire often followed. They hung in the chapels by the walls with water and sand near by. Water was ~~then~~ carried from a 'spout', an iron tube fitted where a stream of water ran, and it was stored in pitchers made from a local earthenware. Very few people had water laid on. Then-a-day the mark of social life was decentralization, and it applied particularly to the mode of producing food. The market town of Pontypridd was some distance away, and conveyance was difficult. So many people kept poultry and pigs, and almost every household, however small or mean kept a 'tidy' garden wherein grew stock vegetables for the family use. A trip to

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market was a Red Letter Day in those not so distant times. The Co-operative store arrived in Rhondda over fifty years ago and much of the shopping was done at the street doors. One of the most interesting of the old salesmen was the stocking man who used to call out 'Sana, Sana'. He carried dozens of stockings on a curiously shaped wooden pole fitted to a forked upright, apparently cut from a tree. The stockings were joined at the toe, and slung over the pole which he carried over his shoulder rather like a yoke. Shops were very few. But who shall be eager to show that Rhondda has 'progressed' since those days? The wise man of Scripture has said, 'There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.' And all this was the portion of Rhondda in those days.

The Welsh have a word for home which surpasses the English. It is *cartref* and means 'the dear place'. It is a conception of home which the familiar Rhondda hearth and steam coal fire strengthens. The home is the heart of Rhondda and the heart is quickened by the lares and penates of the hearth.

Aelwyn fach lan, Digon O dan,
Y plant yn canu'n felus,
Tad yn gwrando,
Mam yn gwynio
Ar dyma teulu hapus.

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(A bright little hearth, with plenty of fire,
The children singing happily
Father listening,
Mother sewing,
And there is the happy family.)

At that hearth in which a fire is always kept burning and a kettle on the boil — for there is the constant risk of a pit explosion, and hot water in quantities is wanted by the ambulance — the family gathers together, especially when the days are cold and short. There is enacted the domestic drama and there the vital conversation of the day goes on. As in all societies that have not become sterile the subjects are important because they are concerned with primary matters — babies, marriages, relations, burials, and all those other petty and precious details of that intimate life of man which will continue long after complex society totters to its last crisis.

Jack Jones, the author of *Rhondda Roundabout*, did not seem to be very concerned with telling the world about the Rhondda hearth, but it is quite safe to say that thousands of Rhondda folk are living unassuming lives focused round it rather than round the pub. And Jack Jones surely knows it.

Admission into this inner Rhondda circle is not always easy, as well intentioned philanthropists from London know to their cost. One charming lady hastening on her errand of good will entered a miner's home expecting to see the gathered family, but before

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anyone could pull her back she burst into the kitchen to find the breadwinner having his bath in the galvanized iron washtub in front of the fire. In a state of shock she rapidly withdrew, and does not now care to rush in upon the Rhondda family. There are few cottages with bathrooms and the custom is for the kitchen to be monopolized by each member of the family in turn when bath night comes round. The miner has a bath in the kitchen every day, and is therefore one of the cleanest men in the world. He prefers having his bath in his home for many reasons, of which the geography of Rhondda is the chief. The collieries provide baths, but after a man has been sweating in a high temperature to have a bath and then, as many have to do, walk over a mountain pass to tea, or breakfast, invites pneumonia. In winter to have a bath at the colliery is to beckon death, and coal getting alone provides sufficient risks.

The Rhondda family is hospitable as most Welsh people are. This makes it a matter of some delicacy when Rhondda folk invite you to their houses or, if you have called, to a cup of tea. To begin with an Englishman who reserves his emotional vocabulary for poetry takes some time in finding out whether the invitation is real or rhetorical. It is all very well to make a mistake once or twice over invitations to the home, but if you always accede to the formal Rhondda offering of tea, you are unlikely to be liked. During the great depression Rhondda people would give their last spoonful of tea to a visiting philanthropist trying

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to be gracious. Tea, by the way, is easily the chief Rhondda drink, and Rhondda exiles often lament their inability to get a good cup of tea in London. The Rhondda water is so soft. It comes from a lonely lake perched at the side of a dizzy mountain pass in the region of the Beacons. A motor car will take a Rhondda man there in about half an hour.

Rhondda people make gigantic efforts to keep the home going on from generation to generation. That is why so much is made of weddings. It is notorious that all local papers are largely concerned with accounts of weddings, but an examination of Rhondda news would put the Rhondda news of weddings at the top. There was a small journalistic scandal not long ago when a pretty Rhondda girl went off quietly to London to marry Quaker fashion a man quite well known in Mid-Rhondda. One of the Rhondda journalists said to the girl's mother: 'Why didn't you let me have details? We would have given you a good send off.'

Sometimes it seems that the poorer the contracting parties are, the bigger the publicity. And this is quite right. It is a sign of the essential conservatism of the poor. Their private property in productive things is gone, their feet slide from contract to status, and they are betrayed in the fairy ring of modern commerce, but they resist to the bitter end the attack on marriage and the family. Long ago Rhondda and Wales had its own marriage customs, some of which are memories of **Marriage by Capture**.

There used to be Biddings at Weddings. A bidding

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was an invitation, sent by an engaged couple to friends and neighbours to solicit their attendance with contributions towards the purchase of household goods. Each gift was written down and regarded as a debt to be paid on a similar occasion if asked. Sometimes a bidder, *Gwahoddwr*, was employed to visit the houses and announce particulars of the wedding during which he would sing or recite an account of the good cheer to be provided for the feast. That has gone, and it is a pity. The bidding was not a piece of medieval superstition (the moderns are the superstitious ones, for they keep the form and forget the reason for the form) but it was a piece of hard common sense. Newly married couples could set up house and home without going on the 'Never-Never System' and watching for the plain van. And of course they did not have to endure long and biologically unsound engagements. They married in the pride of life, had as many babies as they should, and did not have to spend both waking and sleeping hours wondering what to do with useless and hideous vases and objets d'art given them as wedding presents. Instead they were given pots and pans, money for a Welsh dresser, tables, chairs, linen and china. Moreover the gifts being held as a moral debt, they felt no assault on their independence.

Funerals rather than marriages in Rhondda keep to the external traditions of her people. For many years there has been a powerful custom that keeps women away from the funeral. The notice 'gentlemen only' is not understood as the phrase 'no flowers by request'

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is. It is a strict rule, and no one dares to flout it. The public funeral admits women, as does the close family funeral. If one travels along the roads of Rhondda any day, one comes across a slowly pacing troupe of men walking in front of the hearse. Sometimes there are only about twenty, but usually there are a hundred, and at special times the number swells to a thousand. On the day of the funeral of a Rhondda miner years ago now, the shifts working at the time turned out in their thousands and, clad in their mining garb and black with coal dust, marched with the coffin.

As the men start from the house they sing. The Welsh hymnary is a storehouse for the marchers. Tunes such as 'Bryncalfaraidd' or Bach's 'Jesus, priceless Treasure' come easily to the lips. As the gates of the cemetery are reached the men break out into song again. The modern tendency is for the masculine atmosphere of most Rhondda funerals to be somewhat relaxed, and women are beginning to attend more frequently. In the street where the funeral starts, all the householders draw their curtains or blinds, and along the streets the passers-by make all proper marks of respect.

The cemetery at Trealaw is the only cemetery in Rhondda if those at Treorchy, Pontypridd, Pentyrch, and Treforest are excepted.¹ The Rhondda name for the cemetery is *llethyr ddu*, that is 'the black place', an unworthy name, for when one sees it from a mountain-side it seems a mass of white and green. The Rhondda people tend their graves with great care, and they

¹ The last three are strictly outside Rhondda.

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should do, for the Welsh have their traditions in caring for their burying grounds. It is a Welsh custom to plant evergreens and flowers over the graves. On Palm Sunday, and Eastertide, and Whit Sunday the surface of the graves are weeded and dressed, and if necessary planted with fresh flowers and shrubs. Only sweet smelling flowers are placed upon the graves. On the grave of a virgin is placed a white rose, and on the grave of one known for his kindness and generosity is placed the red rose. To molest a plant is deemed almost sacrilege. A relation or friend may gather a sprig or a flower and wear it for remembrance, but nothing must be done to impair the growth of the plant. The gravestones are sometimes whitened at Easter but the habit is dying out.

Shakespeare must have known of these Welsh customs for in *Cymbeline* are the lines:

‘with fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I’ll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack
The flower that like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azured harebell, like thy veins; no nor
The leaf of eglantine, which not to slander
Out sweetened not thy breath.’

The Rhondda family holds great store by the religious feasts. In these days they are confused by bank holidays and the religious background tends to lose its significance. But Christmas, essentially the religious festival of the family, is celebrated in Rhondda

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with far greater respect for its rites than it is in the gargantuan hotels and flats of the big cities. Christmas and in lesser degree Easter and Whitsun means the return to Rhondda of the many exiles, mostly young, who have found work in London or in the manufacturing towns of the north. On Christmas Eve, or more strictly on the night of December 23rd, the waiting-room and the platform of Paddington station are thronged with partly asleep but quietly excited Rhondda folk returning to spend Christmas with the family. As the midnight train speeds on through the west country spontaneous bursts of song from the carriages echo past the farmsteads and the Swindon sidings. In the cold grey morning the train, which runs specially straight through to Rhondda without passing Cardiff, begins to unload its passengers. It is rare to see an express train stopping every half-mile or so at the little Rhondda stations, but Christmas comes only once a year.

In the old days Rhondda was forced to be self sufficient at Christmastide. When there were no railways nearer than Porth, and when the roads were few and difficult, travelling was dispensed with at such a time except for the most urgent reasons. Families looked inwards upon themselves, and explored that forgotten territory where the slipper becomes for one mad hour the prey of homely hunters.

Those old Christmases were not sponsored by the shops, and no artificial mercantile spirit stimulated the devotions of her Christian population. But they

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bore the authentic character of Christmas as it has for many hundreds of years been celebrated within the body of Christendom. Even now, it is possible to seek and to find that Rhondda Christmas which has not changed in its substance, but only in collecting frilly accretions.

Perhaps for many English people, who have not seen snow at Christmas for many years, the noticeable thing about Rhondda at Christmas is the snow which seldom fails to cover her bare hills and the edges of her crowded valleys. The snow lies in great drifts in the north end and in the passes leading from Rhondda into the other valleys, and sometimes it comes in such quantities that the whole valley rests deep under it.

Yet Christmas in Rhondda is not a time of cold. The valley is sheltered and the prevailing winds from the south-west blow gently thence to the north of the valley, so that although the snow lies for many months on the hillsides the valley is by no means so cold as is the south-east of England. As the night excursion train pursues its frosty way through the west country, the morning light shows the traveller that the frost disappears as the train climbs upwards to Pontypridd. And often the weather is mild and almost warm in Rhondda when Cardiff is shivering.

The shops in Rhondda are packed with Christmas goods some weeks before Christmas, and as the Holy Day approaches, the stream of shoppers increases until on the Eve it is with difficulty that one can move along the thronged streets. Few families in Rhondda

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go, without their Christmas dinner, and the philanthropy of numerous institutions makes it possible for the poorest children to have their Christmas toys. Before the passing of the *Morning Post*, that journal used to collect sums of money to buy gifts for the children of distressed areas, and many Rhondda children had their portion out of this offering. Now the *Daily Telegraph* continues the work.

That old-established institution, the Christmas Club, is very popular in Rhondda, and without it very many would be unable to keep Christmas in the completest way. The exiles bring their tributes also to the feast. Many of those travelling cases which bulk so large and appear so heavy contain very much more than the necessary equipment for spending Christmas at home. One Christmas time, as a Rhondda bound train came out of the Severn Tunnel into the debatable shire of Monmouth, a man who looked uncommonly like Jimmy Thomas, unlocked one of his bags, and produced a box of cigars. He then proceeded to hand them round to the male members of the compartment who, as was proper, took them thankfully, but with a certain caution. But they were very good cigars, and the motive soon became known. 'I have not seen my home town for thirty years', said Jimmy Thomas's double, 'and I am going to celebrate.' He showed us the contents of the bag. Within it were at least six more boxes of the same excellent cigar, and we gathered that he was going round to his old friends in order to give each of them a sample.

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The sorters in the London post offices have to cope with an increasing parcel post to Rhondda. Once it was a most uncommon thing for a parcel to go from London to Tonypany but now thousands go, especially at Christmastide. Many of them are presents from the exiles who cannot return for Christmas; but they are a sign that while Rhondda is distressed many of her people are 'earning good money' and making their way in a world that gradually grows more friendly to them.

For the majority of the exiled ones, however, Christmas means reunion. Reunion in the Rhondda cottage — Rhondda has no hotels, no flats, and few big houses. Frequently the prosperous exile who has carved a successful career returns to a little four-roomed cottage where he with his mother and father, and perhaps his brothers and sisters, gather around the fireside watching the slow hours of the eve go by while the mountain wind howls without. Most of the children here are much more sensible than the more sophisticated children of London because they believe in Father Christmas. They hang their stockings up too, though it is sad to think that, in spite of the chimneys and the wide fireplaces, not nearly so many presents fall into their stockings as are found in those of the rich children who live in unchimneyed flats.

Christmas, being the Feast of the Child, has a special significance in a valley like Rhondda which has a high proportion of children. And their mothers and fathers are not middle-aged, as a rule, so that the children have more agile allies in their Christmas games.

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Christmas is primarily a religious feast, and accordingly the Rhondda churches make much of it. At midnight the four Rhondda Catholic Churches celebrate the Midnight Mass, and they all have their Crib. There in the manger lies a figure of the Infant Jesus, and around Him are figures of His Mother and St. Joseph and the Shepherds or the Wise Men kneeling in the straw. No symbol of the Rhondda Christmas is so fitting as that, for in that perfect domestic scene of a poor family is summed up the ideal of thousands of poor Rhondda families.

Rhondda has few peals of bells, though Pontypridd has an excellent one, but towards eleven o'clock the worshippers come in goodly numbers towards the church and the chapel. Perhaps the chapels most to be envied are those named Bethlehem. Within them the 'Adestes Fideles' must have a strangely personal meaning and particularly that line:

'O come ye to Bethlehem'!

It was in Rhondda at Christmastide that I began to like that Christmas hymn, 'Christians Awake'. A little company sang it in a little ugly chapel upon the hillside and the mountain loomed darkly from the windows. I think I understand the meaning of that line, 'Rise to adore the mystery of love', when I saw how small was the chapel that nestled in the crags of the valley. A certain mood of pessimism sometimes comes over men as they compare their stature with their titanic world which rolls in a boundless

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universe. 'What is Man that Thou art mindful of him?' Christmas makes man important because it celebrates the anniversary of that day when 'the sky fell upon the earth', and when its Author played with straw, Christmas makes the puniest infant immeasurably more important than the largest star. All that is intelligible but it is also a mystery. But then Christmas is a mystery, though it is given to children to understand it.

Rhondda people try to make the best of their holidays — short as they so often are. The better-off are able to spend their holidays in North Wales and Aberystwyth, or in Devon and Cornwall, or even to make the London tour and sometimes to go abroad. Honeymoon couples dream of going to Switzerland, and sometimes the dreams come true. For the majority of the holiday makers, however, it is Porthcawl or Barry or the Mumbles. Porthcawl is a bus journey of about two hours, or a train journey of an hour or more. There is a good beach and behind it a huge fair, which has most of the delights of Coney Island. Barry has its supporters too, and it is a fine place for the children. The Mumbles and the Gower peninsula is a much farther journey but it is a favourite journey for those who go on society and club outings.

The daily round of Rhondda meals is not much different from that of any other industrial district but Rhondda still keeps to some of the old Welsh food. Many of her exiles are sent local dairy and farm produce, and Welshmen have a firm belief that there is no

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really good food outside the Principality. There is, however, a strong tendency in Rhondda to buy tinned and canned foods. Whether this is a healthy practice one may leave the dietician to decide. But it is a pity since Rhondda is capable of growing plenty of fresh vegetables, and her mutton comes from her hillsides.

Rhondda folk still eat *bara lafr*, made from a kind of sea-weed which grows near Swansea, *tiesion lap* (a sort of small cake) and *bara brith* (a bread with currants in). Not far away is the town of Caerphilly near which is made the famous cheese. Caerphilly cheese used to be made on two little farms from the milk of ewes. Very little of the Caerphilly cheese is of course genuine, but the best imitations preserve its pallid colour and delicate richness.

For many years Rhondda people have had their allotments, and since the General Strike and the collapse the holders have multiplied their agricultural efforts. Many of the miners have come from the farm. Others such as the men from the Forest of Dean grew up in a community which did so much mining and so much farming. There is precious little need to send them instructors, though modern methods of fertilizing and other expert knowledge is always welcome. Some of the Rhondda folk keep pigs and poultry and others have glasshouses and a few hothouses. One enterprising miner has constructed a quite efficient hot water system with a primus stove, some biscuit tins and some odd pieces of piping. In those glasshouses

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and hothouses the finest tomatoes and costly salad vegetables are grown, and there seems no reason why the growing of such produce should not be encouraged on a bigger scale. The slightly ferruginous soil helps to produce gigantic rhubarb, and only a fear of competing with the Yorkshire industrial areas where most of the rhubarb comes from forbids one making the suggestion that rhubarb could be grown in Rhondda for the markets

To increase the importance and productive capacities of the Rhondda allotments is to raise the position of the Rhondda family. The family is to-day in danger of disintegration and reabsorption into a mass proletariat. So far the family in Rhondda holds out against the advancing proletarian scheme of things, but it will triumph only if to families are given the rights of proprietors. The communists, who are the advance guard of the proletariat, declare in their manifesto that the wicked bourgeoisie has done its best to smash the family, and that therefore it is a specious form of hypocrisy to defend it from further ravage. But the communists make the silly mistake of supposing the struggle lies between themselves and the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie have done some harm no doubt long ago to the working class, and the legacy of whiggism has meant the break up of the family into unreal labour units, but behind the abstractions of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are men and the customs and practices of men, and of those customs and practices is the family. The communist is like the prohibitionist

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and the 'Free Lover' in this that he sees the degradation of a thing and proposes to cure it by abolishing the thing itself. But there are tremendous resiliences in the human spirit, and that spirit reasserts itself after the most terrible assaults upon it.

CHAPTER VII

RHONDDA HUMOUR

THERE are not many well-known Welsh jokes, but for those who are prepared to study Welsh there is a very good little book of Rhondda stories told at the National Eisteddfod at Treo ci in 1928. These stories demonstrate the peculiar qualities of Welsh humour in an inimitable way, and since many of the jokes are amusing only in Welsh, it would be unprofitable to translate them into English. Two, however, ought to be so translated.

The first is the story of a teetotaller who approached a bibulous miner with the words, 'Shoni, don't you think beer ought to cost a sovereign a pint?' 'Yes, indeed', answered Shoni, 'and a pint as big as the colliery.'

The second starts with a description of two miners taking it easy. Along comes the foreman. 'And what do you think you are being paid for?' he asks. 'I am waiting for the trams to come along,' answers one. 'And what are you doing?' the foreman asks the other. 'Oh! He is helping me,' answers the first.

These jokes show the close relation of Welsh humour to the Irish. They are both bulls.

Most English folk insist on the stage Taffy and keep up the legend that he lives on leeks and baked cheese, and they will not easily permit anyone to take liberties with this quite mythical person. Incidentally the stage

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Welshman is as absurd as the stage Englishman, or the John Bull of the caricatures. One of the most amusing and private jokes I ever enjoyed was to watch a dark, high cheekboned and melancholic Englishman talking to a fair, fat, and florid Welshman of huge stature. The Englishman was excitable and emotional. The Welshman was phlegmatic and drily sensible. The stage Welshman is just a projection of the romantic Englishman's mind. The Englishman loves to look upon himself as the one hearty, sane, beefy, illogically right-minded person in a mad world. The brachycephalic Teuton who figures in the pages of *Punch* is a romantic abstraction, just as the sly, eccentric, small statured and evil-minded Welshman is another. It is the same with the Welsh accent.

The average Welshman no more goes about muttering 'inteeet to coodness' or 'look you' than the Englishman starts his sentences with the words, 'What I sez is this 'ere', or with those supposedly English grunts which sound like: 'Quite', 'Exactly' and 'Really'. The Welsh accent certainly has its inflections, which by the way are to be found in some of the western counties of England, particularly Cornwall and Herefordshire, but apart from this, the only characteristics of the Welsh accent are the un-English vowel sounds, and the pedantic precision of the foreign tongue. The vowel sounds, particularly the 'o', remind the Englishman of the French, and this Gallic quality of speech is made more noticeable when he hears a Welshman pronounce the unemphasized syllable of an English

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word with more than its proper accentuation. Then the Rhondda folk, in common with the Glamorgan people, drop their 'h's'. They do not drop them like the Cockney, but rather as the French do. One feels that the Rhondda man knows the sound is there, but that he has made it quietly.

The intrusion of English into Rhondda has the effect of producing a mixed language. This gives rise to numerous amusing tales which are not exported. One old Rhondda woman went to chapel one day with a new umbrella. To her dismay someone took hers and left his own by mistake. In her lament for her lost umbrella she uttered these memorable words, 'It was a nice brolli with a bwton ar ytop and a strapoch newydd nice.' The mines of Rhondda have produced some amusing consequences. One of them was to give nicknames to men who had queer habits or who had specific jobs. For example, Isaac Llyfiwr would be Isaac the Sawyer; Dafydd Davies Coedwr, David Davies Timberman, and Rhys y Gof, Rees the Blacksmith. Then Dai Bara Jam would be one who carried bread and jam to his labours instead of the usual bread and cheese. 'Shake the Shovel' stuck to one man who seeing an overman's lamp at 'the parting' — a place where the tram lines join — said, 'Shake the shovel, boys, and he'll pass along and think we're working.'

In Rhondda's rural days when Rhondda enjoyed comparative isolation and when her people possessed individuality (which both individualism and socialism destroy) there were many 'characters'. One of them

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was an old Rhondda farmer of Penygraig who used to come to town to get drunk. Having taken very much more than he could hold, he would be assisted into his buggy, and his wise horse who knew his master's humours well and the precipitous road even better would quietly take him home again. The spectacle of this farmer drunk to a stupor, the reins fallen from his nerveless hands, being slowly drawn across the pass by his faithful horse is still remembered by old Rhondda folk. It would be useless of course in these days for fidelity to be charged with such a task, for the roads of Rhondda are wider and more dangerous. What with the internal combustion engine, the police, and the Traffic Act, Rhondda is no place for unconscious drivers. He was a good farmer and a good man.

Then there was Mr. Coles of Porth. He kept a butcher's shop, and like many butchers was a fat man. But his fatness was extraordinary. He is supposed to have weighed some twenty-five stone, and being by no means a tall man, his girth provided one of the attractions of Porth. All kinds of people from small wide-eyed boys to housewives would gaze into his shop and this Mr. Coles used to encourage. It was an advertisement the like of which does not now exist. It cost nothing; it went in the closest proximity to the shop; it attended the proprietor wherever he went; and it did not seek the monopoly of trade. The sight of that Rhondda Falstaff would send the Jack Sprat lover of lean meat to another place, as it would beckon Jack Sprat's wife.

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Another Porth 'character' was old Morgan Morgan, who combined the mystery of boot repairing with that of the grocer. But the cobbler must stick to his last, and Morgan Morgan was no exception. His repairs were always behind, and his faithful though ever disappointed customers would attend upon him with all the evidences of rage in order to speed him up. But although he took no notice of tantrums, he had a remarkable gift of 'blarney'. Aided by this great tool, he would soon pacify his customers who would emerge from his shop as if from a Quakers' meeting.

Rhondda has some sprightly old inhabitants. As I was drinking some cider in a Rhondda pub (Herefordshire is not far away) a well-set-up man who looked about sixty walked in for his ale. 'How old do you think he is?' whispered my companion.

'Oh. About sixty,' I replied.

'He's over eighty,' I was informed.

I got into conversation with this young old man whose capacity for old and mild was extraordinary. He had come from the charming district of Crickhowell to Rhondda many years ago, and perhaps he had carried to Rhondda a Brecon tradition for longevity. His liking for ale seemed to have little effect on his health for after having had more than most men could stand, he walked out as steadily and as soberly as he had come in. Almost did he look like some staunch blue ribboner about to address a temperance meeting.

At the north end of the valley come men from the

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Beacons. I was once in a Rhondda pub at the end of the valley when a most barbarously speaking Beacon man came in. He spoke very rapidly and in the most uncouth way imaginable. No one knew what he wanted; no one knew what his polite conversation consisted of. And everyone wanted to help him.

This diversity of language is very noticeable in Rhondda where the old Rhondda dialect lies under the tongue of the North Welsh, the Cardiganshire folk and the 'Book Welsh'. And of course there is the English which Rhondda people often have to use in speaking to North Welsh people. Quite a number of English words have special meanings. For instance 'dull' means 'sentimental'. 'Tidy' means proper or punctual. The expression 'indeed' has a meaning akin to the English 'verily'. Without a prefatory 'indeed now' the speaker means to convey truth 'economically' as Newman might have said. With it the intention is to raise the mere affirmation to an order of truth which is concerned with the quality of the truth. So might a Cockney start his speech with the words: 'Nah I'm a telling yer.'

Rhondda has suffered so much from industrial unrest and from the lack of proportion which comes from a one-sided industrial life that its people have to struggle to keep what little sense of humour they can. Rhondda humour has the quality of that terrible humour of war time. There is little of the benign and gentle humour which England knows so well. Rhondda humour is sardonic; the Rhondda folk

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understand a joke that gives forth a sense of pain. Satire, particularly when directed against the prevailing social order or against the local oligarchy, is popular. The high standard of education and the added 'self education' of Rhondda tends to turn the people from that rough 'knockabout' stuff which is so popular in other mining areas.

This element of pain enters into jokes relating to the 'dole' One Rhondda labour exchange clerk declared that his work always had 'a laugh in it somewhere'. He laughs when one man comes in to claim benefit for his brother who does not feel well enough to come himself Then at a stoppage in the queue signing on, one man will shout out. 'Hi, Bill Tell my missus to fetch my dinner when tha gets out.' Or, 'Fetch my bed I've got a permanent job at last!' There is much in this joking spirit which takes the mind back to those war years when with death surrounding hundreds of thousands, the joke survived.

There are many stories which hinge on the chapel life. There once lived in Rhondda a venerable minister who signified the proximate close of his sermon by shutting his eyes One day his grandchild was taking part in the service, and since, like most healthy children, she did not care for sermons, she proposed to bring his to an abrupt conclusion 'Shut oor eyes, Gwefyl. Olly wants to have supper at Gyas'

Obediently the aged minister shut his eyes and supper was served very much earlier.

It is common for Rhondda chapel stewards to an-

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nounce the names of those who have subscribed to the church funds, and sometimes the amount is stated. In one chapel there were two ladies whose mother had just died, and it so happened that one of them had stayed on at her mother's house after the funeral. The next week, the list of subscribers was read out, and when the name of the absentee was given the words *heb gofrany* (no subscription) followed. The name of the other was given forth with the words *pump swllt* (five shillings), but her young daughter would not have this, and she at once corrected it with the words: 'Mummie has no grannie as well as auntie'.

There is one classic joke uttered by that famous Welshman Fluell'en, which applies to Rhondda in a way Fluellen never dreamed. It goes: 'It is not cood to come to the mines'. Shakespeare would reiterate that line of Fluellen's with greater force if he could see Rhondda to-day. It has not been good for many to have come to the mines of Rhondda, yet the suffering and evil which fills Rhondda is again and again set at naught when her brave men and women make jokes to the last.

One young fellow from Rhondda whose poor body was to undergo yet another operation laughed before he was taken into the operating room, and said: 'You know, what you ought to do is to tie me up in a ball and throw me to the kiddies to play with'. There is the authentic Rhondda spirit, and it will survive.

CHAPTER VIII

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LONG, long before the Romans came to Britain, the so-called Celtic peoples possessed a religion which helps to destroy the still common idea that they were a race of primitive savages. The gigantic structure of their temples ought to demolish such a foolish belief. Stonehenge is a relic not so much of an ancient temple, but of an old knowledge of leverage and perhaps hydraulics that has disappeared. The now much reduced ruins at Avebury are what is left of a temple very much larger than Stonehenge, and artificial mounds such as Silbury Hill add to the already plentiful evidence that the 'Celts' were a highly civilized people.

Little is known of their form of society except that it was maintained and enhanced by an aristocracy of priests who, known as Druids, were also the schoolmasters, and scientists, theologians and, if we include the Bards, the musicians and poets. But there were strictly 'no men of letters', for the art of writing if known was unused; all teachings, all laws and liturgies, all poetry and prose were delivered by word of mouth. The scholars were bound to exercise all their powers of memory in order to assimilate the already complex body of ordered knowledge, and thus they bequeathed

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to their descendants that long memory which is one of the chief characteristics of the 'Celts'.

More than this they bequeathed a form of society which was rooted in religion, bathed in religion, and ever ordered to religion. The coming of the Christian Faith displaced the older aristocracy of the Druids, but their place was taken by the Christian missionaries, many of whom were Celts. The peak of that aristocracy was the order of Christian saints of whom in Wales St. David takes a natural supremacy. These men and women are not memories; their lives belong to the very warp and woof of the common life of the Welsh people, and the changing forms of religion in Wales have not modified their position. On the contrary the phenomenon of Christian heroism increasing under distress tends to revive the Welshman's glimpse of the old saints who lived at a time when Wales was undergoing miseries and persecutions far more grievous than the distress of to-day.

The coming of the Christian Faith coincided with the Roman occupation, and it is not strange, therefore, to find ecclesiastical and semi-ecclesiastical words in the Welsh language which are obviously taken from Latin. *Eglwys*, a church, comes from 'ecclesia'; *capel*, a chapel, from 'capella', and *ffenestr*, window, from 'fenestra' (churches alone had real windows in those days). Rome exerted among the ancestors of the modern Welsh, except the Silures, an effect much more profound than among the Saxons. An early council of the church coalesced the early Celtic Church with

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the Church in Rome and reorganized it with Rome as the central authority before the pagan Saxons came.

During the Middle Ages Wales remained attached to the see of Rome, though dark tales are told of the lingerings of the older religion. Superstition implies the time-lag of something which survives, and superstition did encompass Wales, and all the Celtic peoples. There is so much talk, however, of the superstitious Celt that it is only fair to say that the Saxons and the other invaders handed on much more recent superstitions, such as the names of the days of the week and some feast days. The Welsh certainly call Monday *dydd Llun* through sheer copying of the English, but Sunday is more commonly *dydd Sabboth* than *dydd Sul*. The pagan English word 'Easter' is in Welsh the strictly Christian word *Y Pasc*, and Christmas which in England is unfortunately 'Yuletide' or Xmas is *Y Nadolig* (notice the French Noël and the Latin 'Natus', and English 'Nativity').

There are in the Welsh culture no relics of the old Druidical order, except for the lately revived eisteddfod and the ancient Bard, who may well have been brought back again with the Troubadours of Provence. The Welsh legends returned to Britain from France and perhaps the prestige of the Welsh poet and musician — for they were one — returned in the same way.

The Reformation hardly touched Wales for over a century except in a formal rejection of the papal supremacy. It would seem that the Welsh conservatively continued to believe what their fathers had

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taught them and not until 1563 did a Welsh Bible appear in the now Protestant cathedrals. Wales except Pembroke was thoroughly Papist and when the sap of that tradition failed, the Anglican establishment was looked upon with little fervour. There was however a great desire to have Welsh Bibles. There were numerous translators of these such as William Salesbury and a Dr. Parry. But the results were meagre enough. The Anglican Church in Wales continued to be alien in spirit and hastened the rise of the Protestant 'Free Churches'.

The whole quarrel in Wales between the Establishment and Dissent can be summed up in the words of Sir Thomas Phillips, himself an Anglican: 'For several generations no native of Wales has been appointed to a Welsh Bishopric, and but rarely to any office of power or authority in the Church'. The result was far reaching. Apart altogether from the normal pride a people has in itself, there was the whole problem of religion and the presentation of religion by English clergymen to monoglot Welshmen. We can imagine a good and earnest young preacher fresh from a university and, with the best of intentions, trying to speak simply, using such a word as 'omniscience'. Perhaps few in a country congregation in England would understand the word, and certainly only a few more Welsh people would. But let us suppose the preacher uses Welsh. Then the word becomes *hollwybodaeth*, and an old apple woman would understand. There are those who condemn the Welsh language for its

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inability to express words which in English are rendered by latinized words, but the Welsh language is capable without going outside itself and without periphrasis to express precisely the meaning and in such a way that simple people may understand.

The religious quarrel in Wales was wrapped up in the close hold the Welsh had on their language. The view of Dissent in Wales was appreciated by English people best at the end of the last century when a revised version of the Bible — probably a more exact version — was rejected by the people as running against their traditional King James's version. In spite of all the changes in speech the language of that version interprets for the mass of English people from plough-boy to professor all the latent religious spirit of its social body and speaks to its condition. Language is a reflection of a people's nature. In striving to extinguish it from the state church in Wales, harm was done not only to religion but to men as men. Dissent, in resisting the attack, became the acknowledged guardian of the Welsh language and remains so to-day.

When the coal regions of Rhondda were first being utilized, the Church of England had, however, begun to adjust herself to changed conditions in England. The nineteenth-century Anglican movements, whether Low Church, Oxford Movement, Broad Church or the Maurice-Kingsley Humanitarian Movement, had the effect of awakening the Church in Wales. There had of course been the work of the Wesleyans who were originally an Anglican Society, and with them such

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Welsh Anglicans as Daniel Rowlands of Llangeitho and Howell Harries. Concerning the former it is worth while noticing that his unofficial services were heard by Welsh people from all over the Principality and it is recorded that there were many from Glamorganshire.

The Church of England in Wales was disestablished by 1920 but that seemed to bring a new vigour into the Church's work. When Rhondda was but a thinly populated valley, the people were fairly well divided into Church and Chapel. The Coal Rush, however, precipitated a leaning to Dissent, and although the Church is not only maintaining her position and actually gaining an immense amount of ground, Dissent is still overwhelmingly powerful.

The Church of England has of late become peculiarly popular for reasons that are obscure. In conserving the unrivalled English Prayer Book in the Welsh tongue wherever possible, and in insisting on a sense of beauty and tradition, painfully lacking so often in the gaunt chapels of Dissent, she has kept her communicants and has received others who have tired of the atmosphere of puritanism. It is only fair to the Dissenters to point out that it has become fashionable to go to church. People with little religious leanings prefer to be married in church rather than chapel, and their glimpse of its interior turns them aesthetically to it. There are perhaps other reasons, one of which hinges on that delicate boundary between politics and religion. The Dissenters are composed of more

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diverse religious bodies than in England. If we consider them in their historical order we should begin with the Independents — the Congregationalists — *Yr Annibynwyr*. But although Congregationalism has in England an ancient history, it came to Wales very late. This sect arose in the time of Queen Elizabeth and numbered such great men as Oliver Cromwell and John Milton among its early members. It is worth while remembering that Welshmen claim Cromwell, whose proper name was Williams, as a brother Welshman.

Rhondda Congregationalism has largely come to mean a church for English people and English-speaking Rhondda folk, yet there are very many churches of this denomination where the services are in Welsh, such as Hermon, Treorchy, and Ebenezer, Tylorstown. The members of this church would appear also to have that intellectual approach to religion — and this in Wales which prefers the emotional approach.

The Baptists may be an even older denomination than the former, but their origin is obscure. In Rhondda they are as strong as any other religious body, and like all the chapel folk they delight in Biblical names for their buildings. Of late there has been an unhappy decline in pastorates and the reason is bound up with the economic distress. Of course the individualistic church government of the Congregationalists and the Baptists means that a successful chapel from the point of view of finance and membership continues to prosper and attract, while a chapel

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with poorer and fewer members has to fight against the peril of closing its doors. And there is no means, or at best little means, whereby the richer church can help the poorer.

The Calvinistic Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists have a synodic system of church government which binds the churches together. The Calvinistic Methodists, who are known as 'the strait sect' by reason of their historical and present rigorism, are peculiarly Welsh. There exists no Calvinistic Methodist body apart from Wales and its Empire, because its founders were not only Welsh, but had the strong intention to provide a religious denomination which would apply to the Welsh tradition and the Welsh mind. At a time when Dissent in Wales was dry and formal, the fire and zeal of such men as Howell Harries — once an Anglican — kindled the sunk flame of religion in kindred spirits and brought about a contagious enthusiasm which, when Whitefield preached in Wales, produced a religious fever the like of which has only faintly been reproduced in the number of Welsh revivals.

The cold and lifeless precision of church and chapel alike was in those days replaced by a devoted passion for religion. It happened too that a false division was made between the natural life of man and the secret spring of religion. Thus the Calvinistic Methodists frowned severely on drinking, football, and the singing of secular songs, and such diversions were held to be devilish enchantments to wean God's people from their

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allegiance. This rigorism is still one of the chief characteristics of Calvinistic Methodism, in Rhondda no less than in Wales generally.

But if anyone who listens to a Welsh sermon or attends a Welsh chapel service in Rhondda wishes to understand the meaning of what might otherwise appear so much vain babbling and even hysteria, he will start by studying the history of the Calvinistic Methodists.

First of all, men like Howell Harries and Daniel Rowland understood Welshmen. They knew that they were disposed towards the poetry of religion and of the gorgeous costume in which the ancient Scriptures are arrayed. They knew also that they had a love of theology which might seem to run counter to their more intuitive understanding. The successful Welsh preacher must therefore combine two apparently opposite modes of approach. There must be what is called the appeal to the heart, but it must not be a slipshod appeal; the preacher must remember that there are many in his flock who can dispute many a knotty point of divinity, and perhaps there may even be a moderately accomplished metaphysician among them.

Given the requisite theological basis and inner structure, the preacher may then work the strangest wonders with an impassioned oratory. The order of a Welsh service is carefully designed to lead up to the sermon and at the giving out of the text the congregation is like an inflammable substance which the text

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itself may ignite. Then comes the critical moment for the preacher. He has to control that inflamed audience. His sermon — usually longer than that of the English parson — may rise to its climax long after the combustible material of his audience has burnt out, to leave them listless and bored. The trick lies in permitting the fire to rise to a certain level and to conserve it until the climax at the end when it is stimulated into a great blaze.

The work of Calvinistic Methodists in creating the Welsh sermon has been a great asset to all Welsh Nonconformity. So has the once common habit of interrupting the preacher. There is no doubt that in England and Wales, particularly during the Commonwealth, it was quite customary to have pew and pulpit arguments which would be termed mere brawling in these days when controversy has almost disappeared. In Wales, while adverse criticisms of a preacher died out, appreciative interjections grew more common so that a burst of pulpit oratory was greeted by words of applause from the congregation. There is much of this 'enthusiasm' in Rhondda chapels though lately it is frowned upon. The time of prayer is equally a time when the preacher's eloquence is chorused by the groans, the Amens, the sighs, the *gogogiant* (glory) and the *molwch yr Arglwydd* (Halleluya). A prayer in Welsh prayed by a Welsh preacher is much more than a prayer. In the most ingenuous way the intention is to set out the whole mind of the congregation not only towards God, but also towards itself. It becomes a

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form of self-expression, and all the arts of Welsh speaking are employed. In many a Rhondda chapel one may observe the preacher while praying stride from side to side of the pulpit as if he were addressing the people, and gesticulating with closed eyes in a way which may and does either shock or amuse the English watcher.

The structure of a Welsh Nonconformist service is well made. There is nothing haphazard in the means employed to raise up the hearts of the people. The old Welsh hymns have no counterpart in English. Many of them were written by accomplished Bards and poets, and bear traces of an older classical form of Welsh poetry. The words and music of many of them were written and composed by the same man, and the tune and the words are often inseparable. There is a planned ascent from the first hymn to the beginning of the sermon, when the quiet sometimes almost hesitating words of the preacher come perhaps as a surprise to the Englishman who imagines he is to bear a verbal onslaught from the start. The tone is pitched low, but as the outlines of the subject begin to be filled in the voice of the speaker rises. Then again it falls, and rises again. Perhaps it will become intensely solemn and even sepulchral, and then again it will resound clangorously or issue forth in the shrill and startling alarm. Almost all the variations of the human voice are utilized, from the tremulous accents of an exquisite tenderness to the earnest tones of remonstrance and a thunderous denunciation. The

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whole proceeds in its journey to the *hwyl* which is the periodic close of an essay in a classical and yet living form of speech. The *hwyl* has the effect of an enchantment, and used by a skilful preacher it is a form of mesmerism. Sunday by Sunday in the apparently ugly chapels of Rhondda the service proceeds towards this climax, and Sunday by Sunday thousands of Rhondda men and women are in different degrees caught up into their too short-lived heaven where words pulsate like throbbing music and where music itself loses all earthly grossness to lose itself in the Songs of Zion.

The hymns of Welsh Rhondda Nonconformity may not easily be translated into English, though the attempt has often been made. To begin with, Welsh, like German and Italian, is a language fit for singing. In the second place there are many Welsh words, particularly in Welsh poetry, which have no equivalent in English. But the chief reason why they are untranslatable is that they belong to Wales in Welsh and to no one in particular in any other language. They were written by men who were instruments of the tradition of the people, and their poetry is a reflection of that tradition. It may sometimes be possible to translate the sense of the words but not to translate a tradition. That is part of the life of a people and cannot be altered substantially.

Rhondda chapels do not have big organs as a rule for they are not necessary. In days gone by there was either an instrumental accompaniment by men who

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were usually miners or else the congregation dispensed with accessories. In the Christian churches of the East, whether Orthodox or Uniat, the people have such fine voices that the intrusion of a musical instrument would mar the beauty of the singing. In Rhondda the same holds good. It is not true to say that all Welshmen can sing, or even sing well, but they have a keen sense of singing especially in a corporate manner, which Gildas noticed. They have no silly tradition that it is only gentlemanly or womanly to sing in a restrained and rigid fashion. 'They do not know that English art of 'making a noise quietly'. And they have none of that reserve which for the Englishman is so greatly needed to keep him from the worst results of his sentimentality. A Rhondda miner is capable of singing the most luscious, the most sentimental, and the most endearing hymn with all his vocal power unhindered by a feeling that he is either making a fool of himself or is likely to burst into tears.

The Welsh, according to the great Doctor Parry,¹ were the originators of harmony in singing. Whatever be the truth of that, they certainly preserve and magnify the art in their chapels. Rhondda exhibits in its conventicles the spectacle of a hundred congregations singing in a harmony to the leadership of a man who probably sits in 'the big seat', that is a semi-circular dais underneath the minister. There is no need of a choir set apart from the congregation. The congregation is the choir.

¹ Gildas observed this too.

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Mention of the big seat brings to mind the frequency of calling for a member of the congregation to lead the meeting in prayer. Here again, there is little of the hesitancy and awesome nervousness which an English chapel would be full of, were the same request made. From early years the members of the chapel are trained in the art of praying well. That involves for the laity as well as for the preacher a practical knowledge of histrionics. Piety there may be, but piety without eloquence and that kind of eloquence which moves the whole body is not greatly esteemed in the chapel. There is one little Welsh chapel which gives over one Sunday evening in the month to a prayer meeting when the leader calls on whom he chooses to pray, and of course to pray in Welsh. There is no way out of accepting the invitation. If anyone does not want to pray then he or she had better not come.

This directness which would alarm most English people is accepted as part of the price of membership of the chapel. The same directness may be observed in the preacher's mode of address. The Rhondda Non-conformist clergyman inherits the Welsh tradition of speaking bluntly to his audience. His job is not merely to enunciate certain beliefs but to care for the lives of those who have placed themselves under his spiritual charge and if he feels that there are members who have failed in their religious profession he may very well tell them so to their face — sometimes in the most dramatic way.

There was, for instance, not long back an old

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Rhondda preacher who, taking his text from the words of St. Paul, 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?' made an exact comparison between the Galatians and the Welsh not merely as blood brothers but as fellows in their sins. And looking in turn at certain members of his audience he described their private sins and concupiscences in a manner which would have alarmed a member of the Oxford Group.

The same directness is partly the secret of the ugliness of the chapel buildings of Rhondda. They are shaped almost always like big stone tents with an ornamental façade. There is no attempt to make them beautiful for they have no other purpose than to cover the bodies of the worshippers from the rain and the wind.

The true beauty for these people is not to be found in their brick pavilions but in the structure of their religious devotions. But there is much more than this. Religion in Rhondda, as everywhere else, is intimately bound up with the affairs of every day. That is almost a platitude and it is often said to emphasize the practical side of religion in ordering religious people to attend to practical virtues. But the common life of men conditions their religious life also; it has an influence in the style of their religious buildings.

Now in Rhondda the people are conscious that there 'they have no abiding city'. One feels this throughout Wales, but especially in a valley like the Rhondda where the agencies of temporal misery and an out of place industrial life severely reduce the

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natural gaiety. There are in Rhondda moments when Rhondda appears divided into two parts, the old Rhondda of the mountains and the valley, and the new Rhondda of the villages like mining camps. The people of Rhondda then appear like the children of Israel on the march and the chapels are but tabernacles awaiting a time when the Jerusalem shall once again be set up and when no man shall adore in any other place.

This harmonizes with the very names of the chapels for they are almost all taken from the early parts of the Old Testament, and sometimes from the New. Some smile at the Rhondda habit of naming a stone chapel Pisgah or Bethel, but they smile without reason. Pisgah was a great height, and men may see far from great heights. Bethel was a valley of stones where Jacob saw the angels of God, ascending and descending. Truly there are Rhondda folk who see their promised land from great heights and in a valley of stony places the 'shining traffic of Jacob's ladder'.

The numbers of English and foreign immigrants to Rhondda have produced religious traditions of a kind different from the Welsh, although the English chapels have their counterparts in Welsh chapels of the same denomination in the case of the Wesleyans, and although the Roman Catholic Church would claim to have been the only Church in Rhondda for many centuries.

The test must be the nationality of the communicants, and this shows that the Wesleyans, the

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Roman Catholics, the Quakers, and the Salvation Army owe their existence mainly to the more specifically English and foreign elements. The division is perhaps arbitrary and invites plenty of criticism. The Church of England so many Welshmen might think is as alien as the Roman Catholic Church, while the Wesleyans could point to their many Welsh chapels in Rhondda.

The Wesleyans, however, are so indebted to their great Central Hall in Tonypany where the services are in English, and where for so long Rex Barker worked that it is difficult to think of Wesleyanism in Rhondda as quite native. Wesleyanism in Wales came early but the Welsh Methodist tradition owed far more to Whitefield than to Wesley, and they followed the Calvinistic theology of the former rather than the High Church sacramentalism of the latter. The union of the three English Methodist bodies did not affect the Calvinistic Welsh group who seem much nearer the Presbyterians than the general body of Methodists. The Wesleyan 'society' in Rhondda found much of its support from the Cornishmen, the Bristolians, and the West Country people, but the work of Rex Barker drew many Welsh people into the Central Hall membership. Many were those who had been hit hardest by the distress and some have confessed that if it had not been for Rex Barker's work they would have joined the Communist Party. Rex Barker had no narrow view of religion which would permit him only to enunciate certain religious truths

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or to attend to the purely spiritual needs of his people. He went farther and conceived of the Christian Faith as an enemy of communism and indeed to all the secular political faiths of the time. Rex Barker would, however, admit to being 'Left' in his political views and he did call himself a Socialist.

The Central Hall is one of the few red brick buildings of Tonypany. It is also one of the largest and has a clock tower which can be seen from afar off. Preachers come from all over the country to speak at the numerous meetings, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, and other societies it shelters.

The Irish, Italians, some English, and gradually a few daring Welsh, have contributed to the spread of Roman Catholicism in Rhondda. Rhondda people take their religion seriously, and the old struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism is still being fought out in Rhondda. The Roman Catholic, if he be an Irishman or an Italian, is regarded as a quite ordinary and respectable person, but it is another matter for the Rhondda Welshman or Rhondda Welshwoman to embrace 'the old faith'. Yet of late years a serious attempt is being made to convert Wales to that 'old faith'. The centre of this Catholic mission is Cardiff where the cathedral is, and where an energetic Catholic Evidence Guild takes up its position in Charles Street.

There are many Catholics in the valleys of Glamorgan. Dowlais and Merthyr for example have their thousands, but Catholicism has had a hard

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struggle to enter Rhondda, where the Protestant tradition is strong. Intermarriage between the Irish and local Welsh people has, however, added to the numbers, and at last the Catholic is realizing that he must not fall into the trap of thinking that his religion is inapplicable to Rhondda. A poem entitled 'Our Lady of Penrhys', which appeared in the *Rhondda Outlook* last June, is a sign that Catholics in Rhondda are remembering that Rhondda was once completely Catholic. The Catholic priest in Rhondda is a mildly heroic figure and only his wish to remain in the background forbids an exposition of his life.

The Roman Catholic Church is incidentally one of the chief enemies of Marxism, and as a body it seems to possess the only coherent body of philosophy capable of contesting the teaching of Marx. At the end of 1936 it formed an apostolate of the laity to combat the rise not so much of any protestant resistance to the Faith, but to the spread of anti-religious and, by inference, Marxist doctrines. The papal encyclicals, *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Rerum Novarum*, are being circulated as well as Catholic tracts against communism. A Rhondda Catholic worker may take courses in Catholic Social teaching and there seems no reason why catholicism in Rhondda should not provide a successful resistance to communism.

Quakerism in Rhondda is very recent and yet South Wales was once a Quaker stronghold. The name of a South Wales mining township, 'Quakers' Yard', shows that there was once a Quakers' burying

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ground in that place, and just over the mountainside of Rhondda at Tonyrefail there are the relics of another. Quakerism came back to Rhondda during the General Strike; and was felt by the mass of people as a religious intrusion. It has meetings at Maes-yr-Hâf and at Pentre, and clubs at Ferndale, and for that matter throughout the Rhondda. Quakerism became as in England a force far superior to its actual membership which does not exceed fifty in Rhondda. When Quakerism came the 'settlement' came. Adult education, hand looms, help for allotments, and other social services followed. In Rhondda the Quaker Meeting for Worship is held every Sunday morning at which some twenty people sit in silence, and some speak. In the seventeenth century Quakerism came to Wales as a revival of religion. Its effect was electric, and it bore all the marks of the later enthusiastic renovations in religion. But Quakerism in Wales was then thoroughly Welsh, and the somewhat estranged attitude which Rhondda people feel towards Quakerism is mostly due to the just feeling that it is an English Quakerism.

The Jews have their synagogue now in Pontypridd, which is just outside Rhondda, but Jewry in its religious aspect has no effect on religion in Rhondda.

Of recent years there has been a rise in the number of Gospel Halls and similar institutions. These and other small 'evangelical' associations go together with the Salvation Army which is a powerful body in Rhondda. The bands of the Salvation Army as they

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tour the side streets of the valley are a feature of Sunday life. The Salvation Army has its Citadels and its social work in Rhondda, and with the Quakers and Community House is one of the chief religious philanthropic bodies.

Space would forbid one to mention in detail the Apostolics, the Pentecostals, the Spiritualists and all the other varieties of religious experience. They all betray that unconquerable mind of man which is deeply dissatisfied with life as it is and with a life which has its ending here.

Organized religion has fallen away in Rhondda except for the Catholic Church. This is put down very often to the same causes that have produced a drift from religion elsewhere, but Rhondda has had to face a series of calamities which have harmed religion in many different ways. It has become increasingly difficult for a congregation to support the minister, and indeed to maintain the church itself, many of the church members have gone away, and some are too poor to find the clothes to attend their services. Rhondda religion, by the way, is intimately bound up with the problem of dress. Only Quakers go to meeting without hats and in baggy flannels or other outlandish garments. Everyone else must wear his or her 'Sunday Best' and often there is no 'Sunday Best'.

It is unfortunately true too that the train and the bus as well as the motor bicycle and the push bike carry out thousands of Rhondda people to the sea and the

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countryside, both only a few miles away. The revolt against puritanism is very strong and the problem of enjoying oneself on the Sabbath is solved by many of the naturally religious Rhondda folk in a way that ignores Sunday as well as the Sabbath and fails to produce much enjoyment. The road to Porthcawl is not too happy a road. There are many better ways of spending Sunday in Rhondda than in trying to escape both the Sunday and Rhondda. Of course a Catholic has not got to worry over the question. There is Mass in the morning and for the rest, Sunday is the best day of the week. As in the world so in Rhondda there is more than a suspicion that the flight from religion even of the puritanical kind involves a flight from oneself and perhaps a jump into paganism. For those who seek to rest without religion the Hound continually cries:

‘None shelterest thee who shelterest not Me.’

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE IN RHONDDA

ONE of the main defects of modern life is to be found in the stereotyped mass-produced social life of the people. The nineteenth-century Whig who advanced the scheme of commercial wealth and who saw with a thin emotion the new smokestackocracy busily amassing its fortunes, left a legacy of ruin in the real life of the people. Rhondda is a living witness to that legacy and her people recall the angry forebodings of Carlyle, the pessimistic prophecies of Marx, and the equally strong denunciations of Blake.

The miracle is that in the modern world men have continued to call the bluff of the machine. Yet it is a resistance that does not produce the fruit of his other and older resistances. An ancient battle gave a living society a ballad, but the class war and the war against a mechanical life produces fatigue and fatigue's last resting place, Marxism. A fatigued social body finds it almost impossible to carry on the social tradition, and the cry of Israel, 'How shall we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?' is the cry of Rhondda.

Rhondda folk are a regimented folk. They are forced to live a life of rigorous discipline. That is the sort of life the machine age demands. It is not a little

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strange that when the anarchic and feudal institution known as the family was very powerful, and when the members of society worked very much harder, but more irregularly and freely, the social life was integrated. The old individualistic life which was at the same time subordinated to social coherency left families pretty much on their own liberty. Yet this older society achieved a genuine unity in its social life. A holiday belonged to the whole of the group, and sports and pleasures affected its every part. This is the origin of the team game. And it is probably the origin of 'playing the game'. 'Playing the game' was an idea appreciated by the common people of England and Wales long before some prig ranted about the thing in one of those private schools known as Public Schools.

There is still a fair amount of social life left in Rhondda. And three main means of carrying it on still exist. They are the church and chapel, the inn or club, and the home.

The church as a means of carrying out social duties has a very ancient history. When one hears a somewhat superior person make sly remarks about Mothers' Meetings one wishes that some expert on the subject would tell him of the important place which religion has in the social scheme of mothers. The Christian Church (still powerful in these isles) is traditionally associated with the family and mothers are the mainstay of families. The church will therefore continue to have her Mothers' Meetings, her Dorcas Societies, and

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her Sewing Meetings. A little less gossip among them and all will be well.

The church is a body of people. It means nothing else if it does not mean that. Its concerns are therefore not merely religious services, but they extend through the whole life of society and even those who remain nominally outside it are touched by its outstretched hands.

This is particularly true for Rhondda. The church and the chapel have rightly taken over the duties of aristocracy. Formal aristocracy has disappeared from Rhondda, and if it were not for the church, Rhondda society would be a base democracy ordered towards an oligarchy. But the eternal quest of men for the hierarchic is met in the life of the church, which alone among the public institutions keeps her perennial sense of gradations and values. The church is the home of the home, the home of the common tongue, the home of culture and the home of learning. The church is moreover the mother of the school, and Rhondda will find, as everyone will find, that if education is worth while it will have to stop its secular career and return to the church.

The church has its own concerts, its own cricket teams, its festivals, and its societies. Rhondda life would be beggared if these were to disappear, yet the most important offspring of Rhondda church life is the Sunday School.

The Sunday School in Wales has always been a much more important affair than it has been in

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England. It has never been a sort of pious crèche for small boys and girls to go to on Sunday afternoons while their parents have a nap. The Sunday School in Wales used to be the school for grown-ups.¹ It taught them to read and write, and to know the Scriptures, and it also taught them the elements of the Christian Faith. Even now, while the grown-ups do not attend quite so much, the Sunday School in Wales is a cultural and social force which it has never been in England. Years ago Rhondda Sunday Schools used to have their annual tea as Sunday Schools used to do the world over. But there was very much more ceremony. First a procession through the streets, then games in the fields, and a little eisteddfod after tea. Many Rhondda folk have high memories of a small hall crammed with small children, and almost as many grown-ups, of very hot tea, sweet cake, bread and butter in abundance, and vases of flowers packed remarkably tight. These memories belong to the stuff of Rhondda, and they will be remembered by thousands of the older folk who have learned how to make bricks with very little straw. To-day the Rhondda child is taught to move farther and farther away from his being and his native haunts, in order to receive no more pleasure than his ancestors, who made primary though not primitive things serve their purposes just as well. It is not merely a matter of degree but a matter of kind. A universal itch to colonize the planets has meant as a great man has

¹ The chapel minister still teaches his deacons.

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said that the planets have become suburban. But the place where a man was born can never be suburban. The more it be cultivated, the more precious, satisfying and central it becomes. Those sweet cakes — no confectioner could make them; those draughts of hot tea — no urn of modern and approved pattern would issue them; those laden vases of flowers — which no Bloomsbury aesthete would permit, no florist ever sold. But they were signs that the people rested upon realities. Nowadays the Rhondda Sunday Schools go in motor coaches to the seaside, where the hasty eating of sandwiches, the drinking of tea from vacuum flasks, the swallowing of ice cream, and the expenditure of exorbitant sums on Americanized amusements succeed in disintegrating the company which has probably already got parted on the journey.

There is a lot to be said for the Procession. It is perennial. It upsets trade. It joins people together in a sensible way. It is one of the few reasons that justify the Militant Left. It is a huge and easily seen symbol. There is a lot to be said for Bun Scrambles. They are disappearing with the procession whose members are indulging in Bus Scrambles twice a day. Bun scrambles bring people together to perform the most important task of eating together. St. Antony in the Wilderness ate little because he ate alone. But the church is made up of social saints and social sinners, who perpetuate the feeding of the multitude.

The main objection against the excursion in motor coaches is that a body of people should rejoice in their

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own place. It makes no sense that Tonypandy should rejoice in Barry. It is as sensible as rejoicing in Birmingham. And again, Tonypandy people rejoicing in Tonypandy about a matter which concerns Tonypandy, makes the smallest urchin a person of importance. But that smallest urchin is nobody in Barry; he is just one of a crowd, and he usually gets lost. As for the others, they become public persons in Tonypandy which is proper since they are performing public duties. In Barry they are private persons. The best they can do is to go on the roundabouts, rush down water chutes, pull levers, lose sight of each other, and almost miss the coach home.

After the Sunday School, the Singing Festivals (*Gymanfa Ganu*) of the different churches are next in importance. *Gymanfa Ganu* are held annually, though this annual meeting is merely the harvest time of much hard cultural work, which has gone on throughout the year. It is the custom for groups of chapels to meet in the spring for these festivals. In the morning the children gather to achieve victory and in the afternoon and the evening the grown-ups, divided into choirs and evening congregations, compete likewise. With the singing festivals go the church concerts, which are amateur but not amateurish. No one comes to clap politely but everyone comes to criticize. The same spirit of critical fervour applies to the church operas, oratorios and dramas. Rhondda takes its entertainment seriously, and competition is ruthless in the smallest exhibitions of singing. Compe-

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tion is a very good thing in matters that do not matter, but it is perilous in matters that do. Everyone ought to want to do something useless as if it were really important. Now when Salem produces *The Messiah*, the experts from Carmel arrive openly in order to take hints. Each denomination has its own singing festivals and sometimes the different denominations compete with each other. One wonders whether there does exist an Arminian style of singing among the Wesleyans, and a Calvinistic method of singing among the Calvinistic Methodists. There ought to be. I should hope to see the former singing in a free and graceful manner, while I should be disappointed if I did not notice the latter keeping very accurate time, and choosing their hymns most carefully. The Quakers, alas, would have to sing silently unless they had 'a concern for the ministry'.

Easter, besides being the time for the singing festivals, is the time for the eisteddfod, which means a sitting. This is a revival of an ancient Welsh cultural form and being one of the few hierarchic institutions left in an industrial world, it is no wonder that the church is one of its chief patrons. Actually the church is its foster-mother, as the following example culled from the local press suggests:

CHILDREN OF FOUR CHAPELS

A children's eisteddfod was held at Nazareth C.M. (Calvinistic Methodist) Chapel, Pentre, on Tuesday, under the auspices of the church's Band of Hope. The competition was open to the

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children of four churches, viz. Nazareth (Pentre), Jerusalem (Ton Pentre), Dyffryn (Gelli) and Bethel (Ystrad). The committee were fortunate in securing such excellent adjudicators, for *their awards were accepted without question*. They were: Music, Mr. D. Edgar Williams, precentor of Bethlehem C.M. Church; Literature, Rev. D. Jones, Bethlehem, Treorchy.

There were awards for solos for those under eight years, between eight years and ten years, between ten and thirteen years, and between thirteen and sixteen. The awards for recitations were given to those of the same classes, and there were awards for the best quartet, octet, and the best recitation.

This item of news is taken at random from a local paper which during the year sends its reporters to a hundred church eisteddfodau. There is always the fair possibility of finding a young singer or a reciter who will one day compete in the National Eisteddfod.

The adjudicators, whether at the church eisteddfodau or the secular eisteddfodau, are very thorough in their criticisms. Here are some from an Easter eisteddfod of a Baptist church:

CWM, EBBW VALE. Unfortunately, the tone at the beginning was rather dead for an opening of this kind. Many phrases were quite pleasant. On the whole a creditable rendering.

HANDEL, CILFYNYDD. Opening an improvement. Tempo very good, but the choir fell away here

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and there. General build up of the passages very creditable indeed.

LLANHARAN. Broad and clear in opening. Tenors rather strident in this movement. Tenors a little tinny in Dawn passage. Very good body of voices.

MORLAIS. Splendid opening. Inclined to hold back too much. Really good tang, bite and balance throughout.

The last choir won the prize, but unless we knew the prize was for singing, it would almost appear that there was a competition for the best beer. The 'really good tang and bite' is a useful reminder that the public house is the second guard of Rhondda's social affairs.

In the heyday of Rhondda's prosperity the public house was built to meet the demands of the well-off miner and the commercial traveller. There is a pretentiousness about the Rhondda pub which present circumstances show up. No longer are the many rooms filled with thirsty workers and travellers. On Thursday evenings there is a dreadful emptiness as if the valley were attending a monster Temperance Meeting, and on Sunday, as in all Wales and Monmouthshire, the pubs are closed. There are compensations however. The beer, which is as good as most beer, is sixpence a pint. The miner would start a row if his bitter or his old and mild were raised a halfpenny more, and he is quick to notice any deterioration in the quality.

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The Rhondda pub remains a masculine republic. In London and too many of the big cities and towns a deplorable habit of permitting and even encouraging women inside pubs has been going on for a long time, but Rhondda is sensitive to the pub as a masculine institution. A few women brazen their way inside, but they are exceptions. They usually come in when dancing is going on in one of the neighbouring halls, and they do not stay for long. Meanwhile the men continue in one of the few really successful democracies. Politics, the weather, sport, and numerous other topics are very good reasons for drinking beer. Sometimes politics is the favourite subject, and it is not uncommon to see some ten or so men debating the merits of Communism over Moderate Trade Union Labour, or to hear a Welsh Nationalist or even a Liberal or Tory interpose his point of view. The discussions are well waged, and yet in spite of the proximity of bread-and-butter politics, the contestants are always well disposed towards political theory. There are impromptu political debates in Rhondda pubs which excel the more ordered and duller debates in the public houses of Parliament.

The pubs of Rhondda are the homes of benevolent associations such as the Buffalocs. But it is the club which has largely taken the place of the public house in this and other matters. The clubs of Rhondda are numerous and quite different from each other. There is the political club — the Labour, Liberal and Tory parties all have their clubs — and in addition there are

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a surprising number of Tory working men's clubs. Here one may play billiards and enjoy a splendid hot bath, buy one's drink at a cheaper price than at the pub, and meet friends of similar tastes.

Then there are the social clubs which have no political affiliations. Of these there are the clubs which bring together people of the same racial stock such as the Hibernian Club (there is an Hibernian Band too) which has a fine library of scientific and educational books, and which provides skittles, darts and concerts, and clubs which are just clubs such as The Dragons of Pentre who during their twenty-eight years have helped along the cause of Rhondda charities. Then there are sports clubs which promote their special games.

The most interesting are those queerly named clubs which seem to have become very popular in recent years. There is the Shot and Shell (the British Legion Club), the Resurrection (near the cemetery, Treallaw), the Greasy Waistcoat, the Dog and Muffler, and the Monkey. Few of the pubs in Rhondda can compete with these clubs in the humour of their names, but one pub can. That is Paddy's Goose near Tonypandy railway station. It reminds one of the traditional Irish publican who owned it, and who considered it as a goose which laid the golden egg of profits.

It is at these queerly named clubs that beer and 'sing-songs' are married. For the man with a good voice, there is always enough beer, though one hopes

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not too much. It is with a sudden distaste that one turns to the Workers' Club at Cwmparc which in place of songs and beer existed to teach its dry palated members the doctrines of communism and to explain the menace of fascism. It had to close down in April 1936 for lack of funds which ought to modify the stories about Red Rhondda.

Since the time of the General Strike and the distress which followed it a number of unemployed men's clubs have sprung up in Rhondda. They are now well set up, and exert a powerful influence in Rhondda's clubland, particularly in sport. It is difficult for those who live in a district where unemployment is rare and due more to personal inefficiency or temporary causes than to wholesale and permanent misfortune to understand the pride the Rhondda unemployed take in their clubs. They have their cricket teams and the scores are reported with those of the other teams in the local press, and they have their suppers and gala evenings in the same blaze of publicity as their more fortunate brothers.

The constitution of the club holds together the Rhondda bands and the choirs (and of course the church choirs are club choirs). The bands range from the well-known brass bands such as the Hibernian Band and the numerous Salvation Army bands, and the drum and fife band typified by the Llwynypia drum and fife band which has toured the British Isles, to scores of jazz bands which play at dances and concerts. Rhondda has a curious musical instrument,

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the gazzoot, which is almost unknown outside Rhondda and South Wales. It is the chief instrument in an annual procession and competition which brings Rhondda to its front door as if the King were coming. These processions through the streets seem to be a throw back to some primitive customs which have practically disappeared. The bandsmen are dressed for carnival, and the favourite disguises are those of nigger minstrels, Spanish bull fighters, and wooden soldiers.

Many years ago the clubs of Rhondda had a 'turn out' every year. The chief officers of each club would ride on horseback, and their rankers would be clad in scarves of the club colour. Many of them wore tinsel decorations. These 'turn outs' were a great Rhondda attraction, and huge crowds would gather to watch the gay pageant go by.

Those were the days of Penny Readings, which were important means of teaching the artisan, and helping him to love and know the legacies of his world. The Penny Readings held concerts, drew up competitions for soloists, duettists, and quartets, choirs and orators. They were the cradles of many great Welsh singers, and they were an ally of the church and the eisteddfod in bringing out the fine vocal and dramatic capacities of the Rhondda people.

In those days there was a theatre in Tonypandy field, just by Tonypandy Square. This place was forbidden ground for a 'respectable woman', but it was filled every night. Then-a-day few people used to

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dance, as it was a custom frowned on by the chapel, and the theatre was also under the chapel ban.

To-day Rhondda has many jazz bands and several dance halls such as the Rink at Porth, the Lucania, Penygraig, and Judges Hall, Trealaw. At any one of these halls the compound negroid-semitic rhythm in vain tries to seduce the Rhondda folk from their traditions. The cinema is another alien influence which is popular but not too popular. Rhondda refuses to have anything but the best in films, and anyone who tries to foist some unworthy film on a Rhondda audience will hear his patrons (if they do pass the box office) comment in very loud tones before they walk out again. Americanisms have come to Rhondda in the wake of the film, and the delightful local accent is broken up by such words and phrases as 'Attaboy!' 'Oh Yeah!' and 'Sez You!'. To counter this there is a movement to produce operas in the Welsh tongue. If such a movement were to grow, and penetrate sufficiently, it would be a great help to the local culture. Operas sung in the Welsh language would be much easier than operas sung in English, as the Welsh tongue is so near to the Romance languages.

The Welsh Press in Rhondda is not so powerful as it is in the north of Wales where daily papers written in Welsh have a good sale. But several journals written in Welsh find their way into many a Rhondda home. The so-called National Organs come to South Wales with a page of Welsh news, and there are the group of

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papers which belong to the *Western Mail*. Besides these there are the *Rhondda Free Press* and a monthly journal called the *Rhondda Outlook*.

In days not so long ago — just before this century opened — no newspapers entered Rhondda, but news was conveyed by boys and men who would come whistling in the streets and singing out the news for an odd copper or two. The bulk of this news was local and did not, of course, pass through the hands of editors, so that, although it had no literary qualities, it had vigour. Sometimes news of imperial import arrived in Rhondda in this way, but Rhondda was not then — and is not now — very concerned with the world. This strange ignorance of world affairs is due to the overwhelming importance of local news relating to the coal industry, and a survival of the whistling newsmen persists because of the coal industry. This takes the form of a number of men who represent the union crying the place, the time, and the date of a meeting — usually of protest — in connection with the coal industry.

It is very hard to draw the line between the life of the home and the life of society. The meeting place is probably to be found at church. It is here that the home projects most meetly into the public life. At church the individual is publicly admitted into its corporate life by baptism, and at church the vocation of marriage is lifted to the sacramental life, while the church performs the last office in the burial of the dead. Church is also a place for making love. There are

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those who sneer at this, but no courting couple could choose a better medium than the hymn book. Rhondda folk do perceive this intimate relation of the church with the home, and very many happy Rhondda marriages have begun in the pews of Rhondda's churches. There are very many enemies to be found in Rhondda warring against this consecrational social life, but they will fail. Already there are two religious groups who have produced new cultural forces which are based on religion. These groups are the Quakers and the Wesleyans.

There is very little doubt that the Quakers and the Wesleyans have a flair for running settlements. The Catholics and the Salvation Army are good at caring for the sub-proletariat as Marx snobbishly called it, but the Quakers have a gift for caring for that odd group of people who are so often made up of 'intellectuals' and poor middle-class people with just a little more capacity for thinking than ordinary common sense. And the Wesleyans keep up their founder's conception of a church being a living society of men and women which cannot be separated from the world it lives in.

The Quaker's own history fits them for their task of attending to unhappy intellectuals. And since the Quakers are intellectually top-heavy themselves, it becomes easy for them to mix with those whom they sometimes call Friends of the Friends — those who, for the most part, have drifted away from the puritan orthodoxy of Rhondda, who earnestly desire 'a more

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spiritual religion' and who, being utopian socialists and pacifists, gravitate naturally to the node¹ of English mysticism, pacifism, and a political extremism which uses the phrases of religion.

The Quakers specialize in adult education. They founded the Adult Schools, they were the first modern people to consider co-education, and when they went to Rhondda it was not merely to alleviate human suffering but to appease intellectual appetites. Thus the settlement grew up with its staff of lecturers, and at the core of all this is the Meeting for Worship. Without it all the philanthropic work would sink into the despised order of 'creaturely activity', but with it the Quakers may look forward not to an increased membership but to many years of Christian work which has its own reward.

After the Great War the Quakers were behind that huge system of relief in Central Europe and Russia. They seemed to have some private secret which could unlock doors which were barred to others, and wherever they went they set up their curious system of settlement-cum-hostel-cum-religious-meeting-house, which attracted the European intellectuals of the middle class, who at the end of the war were poverty stricken and bitter. When the coal problem failed to be solved the Quakers went to South Wales. At the beginning they ran full tilt into Rex Barker, who had formed his own plans for a settlement on different lines. As Rex Barker relates in his book,¹ the

¹ *Christ in the Valley of Unemployment* (Hodder & Stoughton).

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encounter produced a happy compromise. The Quakers went their way with a settlement planned on the lines of the Workers' Educational Association. The unemployed were to be given occupational work, lectures and all the other cultural benefits the Quakers know so much of. Under the chairmanship of the Master of Balliol, Mr. and Mrs. Noble took a big house and property at Trealaw called Maes-yr-Hâf which was opened in the summer of 1928, and started their ambitious course. From the beginning they met with success. Although many good Rhondda Welsh people think differently there was no missionary motive behind the work, and during the nine years of settlement work only two or three Rhondda people have joined the Society of Friends.

The Quakers discovered that the ancient weaving industry of South Wales was worth reviving, so in an outhouse at the back of Maes-yr-Hâf they set about teaching some Rhondda girls all the arts of that old craft. They got the wool from the local mountain sheep, hand carded it with those instruments which look like butter pats with hooks on one side, span the raw unbleached and undyed wool and wove. Later on when the girls were more skilled they taught them dyeing, intricate weaving patterns in both wool and cotton, and at last some of the girls began to show themselves as experts. They held weaving exhibitions at the South Wales and Monmouth Rural Industries Exhibition at Cardiff and at Swansea, and at the Royal Agricultural Show. For successive years they

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have exhibited for sale in one of the rooms at Friends' House during the Quaker Yearly Meeting. The variety of woven fabrics is astonishing. They range from rugs and heavy tweeds to the most delicate silk embroidered work with Celtic patterns, from dress lengths and smocking to scarves and ties. Great use was made of the Celtic Cross which was worked into almost every article which lent itself to it. A Miss Schweitzer from Switzerland came in 1932 with expert knowledge in designing, and to her the weaving industry owes a great debt. Her vision carried her beyond the walls of the weaving shed for she dearly wished to see the weaving industry diffused in the Rhondda cottages. The future may justify that vision.

Dressmaking was another craft at Macs-yr-Hâf, and as part of the Quaker settlement, carpentry and boot-repairing shops were set up. The men also had their drum and fife band, and for both sexes an orchestra, and dramatic and folk dancing societies. Then there were the lectures in citizenship, philosophy, political theory, and special tutorial classes in the winter. The library is very well stocked, and the political and sociological sections although distinctly biased towards the Left have Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, Burke's *Reflections*, Chesterton's *Essays*, Lord Cecil's *Conservatism*, and Cobbett's *Rural Rides*. These books are read as seriously as any of the Left stuff.

Rex Barker, from the moment he came to Rhondda, was very alive to the need for books which were not

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specifically Left and Marxist. Quasi-Socialist as he is, he was well aware of the vicious tendencies of Marxist pessimism, and his special work lay rather in providing in his Community House and Fellowship the antidote to that pessimism.

The basis of Rex Barker's work was Fellowship which he received from the Wesleyan tradition. Wesley himself owed much to the Moravian Brethren and their fellowships and love feasts. But Rex Barker took part in the post-war discovery of the 'group' habit. As a reaction against a thoroughly pernicious individualism the group habit has been of incalculable value, though it has often lost its balance in excesses. The man who cannot have a holiday without going with a herd has lost something. The man who cannot do a day's work without being bothered by some of the consequences of the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is unfortunate. Solidarity is a very fine thing, especially in war time, but when the fact that all men must hang together is perverted to the sad that 'I', 'you' and 'they' are only 'us' — an indivisible integral thing that has only the virtue of collectivity and none of the virtue of personality and privacy, then it is horrible.

Rex Barker did not see mankind as an inhuman solidarity, but as that human company of the family. The difference is fundamental. The collectivist rests his social order in a concept; the individualist does the same, but the family is very much more than a concept: it is a thing. And as a thing it is age old. Rex Barker did well in forming his Fellowship with the family as

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the pattern. He also, — unlike many Protestants, had a powerful sense of the Christian doctrine of the Mystical Body — a community sharing the Christian Spirit, a reflection of the Founder of the Church, ready to participate in a projection of that Founder's earthly life. He felt strongly the place of religion as occupying a royal place over the departments of economics and politics. In this he unconsciously perhaps returned to the medieval habit of mind. The same regard for religion as authoritative in temporal affairs may be found in Burke and Dr. Johnson, and in Tories of a bygone age. It may be discovered in the work of modern poets such as T. S. Eliot, in the papal encyclicals, and in numerous post-war politico-religious developments, such as Copec and the Christian Industrial Fellowship.

Rex Barker began his Fellowship after a series of open-air meetings in the summer. The crowd was invited into Central Hall and in the smoke haze the men heckled and debated, sang community songs and tried to 'explore social principles', as Rex Barker put it. School teachers joined, camps were planned, and at last the Fellowship was able to secure a house called Whitehall in Trealaw. It was at this stage that there came the risk of collision with the Quakers. Rex Barker aimed at a teaching work which would counteract the Marxist doctrines, but this fell almost completely through. But at Whitehall, Community House began its functions — those of helping in producing a better social order. There was no positive barrier of

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creed which would prohibit anyone from attending a meeting of the Fellowship. Under correction, the writer would believe that the Canon law would not apply to the Catholic who wished to help in the Fellowship, though one would suppose that actual membership would be impossible for him. The whole story of that Fellowship will be found in Rex Barker's book, *Christ in the Valley of Unemployment*. In many ways a sombre book, one is tempted to criticize it in many places, especially because the front cover is a travesty of a Rhondda scene. But Rex Barker's account of the building of that Community House, of the pathos that always attended his group, of the agonies and the reactions, the clash and counterclash of Christian and Marxist are authentic enough. There is a good deal of the Franciscan about Rex Barker as he himself hints. The Chapel of Community House is a twentieth-century reminder of that glad medieval saint whose duty it was to rebuild the church. In typical gay Franciscan fashion, the table of the chapel has upon it a replica of a first-century chalice with the Greek inscription, 'Comrade, why are you here? Be merry'. There is also a statue of St. Francis with his animal brothers.

This man set out rather in the spirit of St. Dominic than of St. Francis. He studied Dietzgen whom Marx called 'the philosopher of the revolution' and *The Positive Outcome of Philosophy* was in his hands for some time before he debated (in the fashion of St. Dominic against the Albigenses) with a local Marxist. The debate showed that Rex Barker knew far more about

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Marxism than the Marxist, though as any Marxist would say, 'Marxism is easy to understand providing you rid yourself of bourgeois and religious dope'. It would seem that the Marxist has a kind of Morton's Fork. The first prong hints in its prickly way, 'You are oppressed by the system in such a way that you must revolt against it. The other prong points out that if you remain passive under the 'system' or attack the Marxist alternative then you are, to put it mildly, the dupe of the capitalist-bourgeois dope fiends. Either way the Marxist has his opponent impaled on his wretched little fork. But Rex Barker not merely counteracted Marxism with religion but with philosophy and it is this that brought him the respect of Rhondda politicians.

The political effect of Rex Barker's work is difficult to estimate. He succeeded in winning over to a Christian manner of thinking many Rhondda people, particularly young Rhondda folk, who on their own confession were drifting steadily to Marxism and to the Communist Party. But he did not merely pluck potential revolutionaries from the burning. There was Bert the carpenter, who helped make the furniture of the House. He was an obstinate Tantivy Tory, and took some time to appreciate the 'other fellow's point of view'.

The Garden of the House shows Rex Barker's essentially Christian spirit. He had it made with the object of surrounding the focal point of the House with beauty. Rex Barker abhorred that sort of puritanism

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which rejected beauty as either irrelevant or else an impediment to religion. It was the Franciscan in the man again.

Farther north in Rhondda at Pentre there is another Quaker 'centre'. It is strictly a meeting house rather than a settlement, but under the clerkship of Jonathan Lloyd — one of the few Rhondda Welsh Quakers — it has interests very similar to those of Maes-yr-Hâf and Community House, and since Jonathan Lloyd is the principal of the Pentre Technical School, his advice on such matters is useful in the work of the settlements. One winter's night two ex-Ashridge men went there to find him directing a reading class of about thirty men. The class stopped its job, and listened to the proposals of one of the Ashridge men for starting a Peace Group. Within a quarter of an hour the group was started with constitution and officers. Peace societies lie thick in Rhondda. There is one at Maes-yr-Hâf, another at Community House, and another at Pontypridd, and there are numerous branches of the League of Nations Union. Incidentally there was a little irony in that some of the branches of the Peace Groups were started by two Conservatives — one a Macmillanite and the other a Right Winger. Pacifism is not, as is so often believed, a private pet of the 'United Front', and there are probably more peace loving Tories than there are peace loving Reds.

The settlements have excellent provision for those who wish to visit Rhondda, and many people take

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advantage of their accommodation to spend several weeks in Rhondda. Many of the visitors to Rhondda settlements are, however, social investigators. They cannot help having that sort of spirit which inhabits the breast of the man who goes to see the animals in the Zoo. Rhondda is distressed; her people are poor in a massed sort of a way; Rhondda presents an incomparable site for an examination into social problems. Thus Rhondda has her sociologists who cannot help looking upon a Rhondda man or woman as part of a statistic or a useful source of social information. The sociologist probably looks upon himself as part of a statistic, but the whole spirit of such a person is low and mean. It cannot be helped perhaps but that is no reason why it should be stimulated by the arrival of any more sociologically minded people. Mankind is no doubt a remarkable sort of an animal encased in a remarkable sort of a cage, but the difficulty of studying mankind is that the sociologists are also in the cage. It is entirely useless for the sociologist to pretend that he or she is not an ordinary man or woman or, as the theosophist might say, 'a Being on another plane', but that is what the sociologist tends to think and for some strange reason his actions are called humanitarian. Rhondda people do not want the humanitarianism of the sociologist, but they want the humanism of a St. Thomas More and a Dr. Johnson, an Oastler and a Shaftesbury. And this kind of humanist is somehow some kind of a Christian or at any rate a religious man.

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One of the prime difficulties in settlement work and political and social work is the evil exhilaration which gives to the social worker a false sense that he or she is in some special way set apart from all others. The Marxist feels this as he is taught that he and his fellow members of the Communist Party are objects of special creation whose task it is to lead the sheeplike proletariat. Any politician is likely to feel this as he looks down upon a sea of faces of men and women. The truth about all philanthropic and social and political work is that it rests on a humility that informs the worker that he himself is part of the problem, that he, far from being judge in anything, is as much the defendant as the prosecutor, and that after all he is great because he is a man.

CHAPTER X

SPORT IN RHONDDA

WHEN Rhondda was a valley of quiet homesteads, trout and Tories, there was only one sport known to its people. That was fox hunting. In spite of the industrialism of the last fifty years there is still one hunt in Rhondda, the Ystrad and Pentyrch, which traverses the country below Pontypridd. But fox hunting is not a Rhondda sport now. Fox hunting depended on a different kind of social order which has vanished from the valley.

Those who prefer to consider history as the tail-piece of pre-history and legend may well consider the theory that sport began in Rhondda long before the age of the squires. They have this evidence to content themselves with.

When the valleys from Blaenrhondda and Maerdy were heavily wooded, it used to be the practice for squirrels to take a daily hop down to Pontypridd. Some would start from Maerdy in the Rhondda Fawr; their opponents from Blaenrhondda; and they would meet at Porth from whence they ran their races. This is the origin of sport in Rhondda, and since Karl Marx has not provided Rhondda proletarians with another, they had better accept it.

The squirrels may have stimulated that great

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Rhondda runner, Guto Nyth Bran, to his amazing feats. This virile son of the soil began a course of running which even the specialized men of our times aided by the accumulations of scientific knowledge of athletics cannot beat. This no doubt explains why his feats are dismissed as legendary. To-day almost everyone believes in the priestcraft of scientists to such an extent that the man who cocks sly snooks at the New Religion, or knows nothing of it and then succeeds without it has to be turned into a myth or an illusion of madmen. But Nyth Bran existed well enough. He was a shepherd on Nyth Bran mountain and he took his name from his working place as was the custom in those days. The story goes that his speed and endurance were developed by daily chasing of the silly but fast breed of sheep, which, by the way, climb like cats.

Such a training made him famous throughout the clans of the region — particularly the Glorans of Rhondda, an athletic club long since disappeared.

Those were not days of carefully prepared and watered cindered tracks, scientific preparations, spiked shoes, and stringed paths. Nyth Bran usually ran in bare feet, and on his tombstone in Llanwonno churchyard it is recorded that he covered twelve miles over the mountains well within the hour, but it is not clear whether the world record of fifty minutes, forty and three-fifth seconds for this distance was not actually longer. He used to defeat by many hundreds of yards a fast horse over ten miles of ground, but the herculean

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tasks in the way of handicaps ultimately killed him. Knowing him to be running in bare feet, a scheming gambler scattered broken glass on the floor of a bridge he would have to cross. When he arrived at the bridge, Nyth Bran leapt upon the parapet, ran along it, jumped down the other side, and though seriously handicapped, caught and beat his opponent within a few yards of the tape. So delighted was his sweetheart that she ran up to him and clapped him on the back. He started violently and fell to the ground; turning agonized eyes upon her, he exclaimed, 'Dyna, ti wedi fy lladd i' ('There now, you have killed me') and died.

Almost a hundred years after the death of Nyth Bran, two other great Rhondda athletes, Ned y Crydd, sometimes known as the 'Mayor of Trebanog', and Mog Perkins arrived as Wales' finest runners. Perkins was a miler, and was held to be unbeatable. When Ned had won both the 100 yards, and the 1000 yards on the same day at the Treforest 'Monkey House', odds of 3 to 1 were laid on him against Perkins for a mile race which Ned won by twenty-five yards, but there is no record of the time.

Benny Williams, Jimmy Wilde's trainer, was a Porth man and one of Wales' leading quarter-milers. Not content with running himself and training Wilde, he helped Walker, the South African who came to England in 1912, to win the Cinderella Handicap and the Invitation Handicap, at Manchester, and prepared David Christopher to win the Pontypridd Powderhall in 1906 off 5 yards. Walker is supposed to have

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covered 130 yards at the Taff Vale Park, Pontypridd, in eleven yards inside 'evens', a feat that has never been equalled, but the time was never officially recognized since the meeting did not come within the regulations of amateur athletics. Of modern runners, W. Mower, who hailed from Mount Pleasant, Porth, deserves some mention for his success in the Cambria Dash of 1929, and Rowland Evans, of Ynyshir, who won the fourth prize in the Scottish Powderhall.

All these and many other Rhondda runners perpetuate the memory of Nyth Bran, but many of them could not have done so if it had not been for Charlie 'Nyth Bran', a descendant, or so he claimed, of the great Bran himself. Charlie was in the habit of financing Rhondda athletes so that they could carry out their training and travel. In this way he kept alive that proper tradition of patronage which secured the status of the genuine amateur.

Rhondda, like most South Welsh valleys, is a stronghold of Rugby football. In England, 'Rugger' is the sport of the 'classes' rather than the 'masses', but this has never been true for Wales, where it outrivals soccer as the 'democratic' game. Forty years ago the Llwyncelyn field, now di figured by coal tips, was the scene of great rugger tussles, and Porth Harlequins played the pick of the world's crack teams. From Porth came ~~the~~ Ernest George, who later became Mine Host of a Cardiff hotel. He was a great rugger forward, played for Penygraig and Pontypridd before being capped for Wales.

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The visitor will often notice in the streets of Rhondda a crowd of youngsters playing rugger in the streets and 'up at the backs'. Now these games are not mere street urchins' games. Rhondda rugby has had to depend on them for the supply of talent. When Harry Jones, who was 'King of the Kids' Porth way, or to be more accurate in 'Little America', started a team by having meetings at the corner of Porth Square and picked his men from the youngsters who made bedlam in the streets, he lit a lamp on the lamp posts on Rhondda (which are used for goal posts) which can never be put out. A team arose from the gamins known as the Porth Scarlets who lost only two matches in their first season and gave Harry Jones to the victorious Welsh side of 1902. He then captained Penygraig against the New Zealanders in 1905, but rugger he declared was not his game, but according to Tom Thomas, a former Welsh middleweight champion, he was a natural boxer. 'They never came up smiling after I hit 'em,' Harry used to say, but whether this referred to boxing or a tackle on the rugger field is obscure.

Welsh rugger owes a great debt to those pioneers and Jack Bassett of Cymmer keeps the debt unpaid. He is probably the finest full-back in the four countries and has been honoured by the captaincy of the Welsh side. What more could a sporting valkŷ wish to claim?

To this day the streets and schools are the nurseries of Welsh rugger. Football is a game which arose in the highways and byways of this land, and consisted

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of a happy riot between two packs of villagers in the lanes and the ditches between. High-speed transport and the other symbols of 'Progress' forbid this in these days, but the spirit of the old football continues in Rhondda. But it is now chiefly left to the schools of Rhondda to maintain the nursery. They do this job very well. Rhondda folk who follow the game will think of Vernon May, Ray and Glan Davies as typical Rhondda schoolboys who have shown what Rhondda can do for her country.

The difficulty of making a sports ground is the chief problem in Rhondda sport. In the 'eighties and 'nineties, rugger was played on a pitch by the riverside above Dinas, called Ynys. A certain amount of excitement was found in retrieving the ball after its frequent flights into the water, and for that reason it was usual to take two balls, so that while some hapless fellow was searching for the one, the other could be put into play. Even then the game had to be held up, for as often as not, as soon as one ball had fallen in the other would follow it.

Many of the miners play rugby, and those who do not play it — and there are fewer 'arm-chair' footballers in Rhondda than in England — read the reports in the *South Wales Sporting Echo* or edge the levelled ash tips to see their team win or lose. There are no first class rugby teams in Rhondda; Pontypridd is the nearest rugby team of the first order, but that is no matter. Welsh rugby owes almost everything to the decentralized passion for the game in all the little

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villages in the region of the coal and iron mines and in the tin plating area of Swansea. The Welsh Rugby Association is in practice the association of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire, and no other National Rugby Association is so democratic.

In the north of England a variety of rugby football with a professional base has taken hold of the industrial townspeople, but professionalism in football does not come to Rhondda. Nowhere else, except in South Wales, may one see a good game of rugby football played by teams composed either of day workers or the sons of day workers. When Wales plays England at Twickenham Rhondda comes to London on one of the excursion trains.

A year or two ago after a memorable drawn match at Twickenham Piccadilly Circus was like Cardiff on a Bank Holiday, and Dai and Lossi in their peaked caps were making a night of it. Those capped Welshmen at Twickenham — many of whom were Rhondda men — amused one *Punch* cartoonist who drew a faithful picture of the crowd waiting to be admitted into the stands. In the long queue the cartoonist has drawn a hundred men in caps and a big but timid Englishman in a bowler. The cartoon was a parable. Rugby to a Rhondda man means what soccer does to a Londoner watching Arsenal *v.* Chelsea.

This is not to suggest that there is no soccer. The Rhondda man is commonly bilingual; he also knows the two codes of football, and he does not forget that Cardiff won the Cup in 1927.

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Soccer was given to Rhondda by a Mr. Hamer. He came from Llanidloes in Montgomeryshire — one of those North Welshmen of peasant stock who with Celtic adaptability have left the fields to work underground. The Porth amateur football club which he formed was a redoubtable side in 1887, and Hamer himself was chosen in the first 'International' match against Gloucester, one of the crack English counties. W. G. Grace, the Grand Old Man of Cricket, refereed that match when at Ashton Park, Bristol, Wales lost by two goals to one. Hamer was capped six times in those forerunners of the present international matches.

Another Rhondda man, Evan Jones, played for Bolton Wanderers, Oldham, and Chelsea, as well as for Wales in the early days of the present century. After the great slump in Welsh soccer the Bantams were formed, and though that club lasted only two years it provided a bridge to such new and strong clubs as the present Porth Club which won the championship of the Welsh Senior League in 1921-22.

Some of the men of that team went into English professional football. Billy Brown to Rochdale, Ogle to Brighton and Hove, Greaves to Swindon, Manuel to Llanelly, Campbell to Dundee (a case of the wanderer returning) and Thomas to Manchester United.

Rhondda boxing needs a poet capable of writing an ep~~ic~~. In the manner of the great classicists and yet with the natural fervour of those homely men such as Burns and Thomson, Cowper and Crabbe he ought

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to have the power of marshalling the names of Rhondda's gladiators of the ring, in a stately measure and at the same time infusing the verse with some of that fervour which properly belongs to one of Rhondda's most romantic products. Romantic, Rhondda boxing certainly is in many senses. It is a 'roman' — a story in the tradition of the troubadours; it is a story of travels over many roads, which have not yet ended with Tommy Farr's journey to America, and therefore a reminder of the journeys of old when tales were told along the way. In the stiffest sense it is romantic since the surroundings of the game or art have in Rhondda taken on a highly charged atmosphere of strain and striving. There is truly something gothic in the whole story of Rhondda boxing; it is a story of thrust and counterthrust, comparable to those flying buttresses of the age of faith; it is a story of sheer struggle ending only too often in those only partially achieved aspirations which remind one of those petty spires which are the palisades of the central and highest achievement, which pierces the sky in a humble sort of a way so different from the vain-glorious sky-scrappings of the age of bombast. That central peak of Rhondda boxing is represented by Tommy Farr, but he was reared upon the slow and certain growth of his craft. Rhondda boxers are legion; and some are famous. Others, however, have not had the fame they deserved. There was Llew Edwards, for instance, who was a second Jim Driscoll both in style and deportment. He won the British feather-

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weight title, went to Australia, where he annexed the Australian featherweight and lightweight titles.

Tommy Farr, his history and his rapid rise to fame, is a matter of world wide comment. Everyone in Rhondda was confident that Tommy would win the championship of the world in 1936. He failed very victoriously and as he is only twenty-three years old he has plenty of time to achieve his ambition.

Farr calls to mind a Rhondda boxer of utterly different weight, build, and appearance, Jimmy Wilde. Small, apparently weedy, but enormously gallant and plucky, Jimmy Wilde became Rhondda's favourite, and not until Pancho Villa (a man trained by Llew Edwards) took away his title, was there anyone found his equal. For more information about Wilde, apply at his home town, Tylorstown. The prowess of Farr has called forth all the poetic talent of Rhondda. Poets, as varied as poets can be, have vied with each other in celebrating his triumphs. This is the justification for sport. It does not exist merely to keep or make people healthy, or to give them something to do, or to amuse them, and it certainly is not art for art's sake. Sport exists for poets, including bad poets, particularly those boring poets who rhapsodize or lament over their favourite gladiators.

Boxing matches take place all over Rhondda. Judges Hall, Treaglaw, has its boxing programme every Friday, and Tommy Farr spent much of his apprenticeship there.

Rhondda was until recently the home of one of the

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London boxing critics, Mr. Emlyn Michael, known to many people as Rhondabout and Hector. Emlyn Michael was, however, much more than a boxing critic. He knew Rhondda as well as any man. He had a nose for Rhondda genius of every kind, and he could write a book review as well as an account of a boxing match. He was responsible for many of the boxing promotions in Rhondda which meant money for the hospitals, and he edited a monthly paper called the *Rhondda Outlook* which demands consideration in another chapter.

Then there is Tommy Farr's trainer, a Clydach Vale lad, Tom Evans. Tom Evans gained his early knowledge of physical training as a runner on local grounds and then learned more on the Continent, where he was introduced to the finer points of the art. As for the left hook which started Neusel on his way to disaster, that was taught to Tommy by Mr. Job Churchill of Penygraig. Tommy Farr's manager, Mr. Broadribb, is well known to Rhondda people as 'Young Snowball', an old boxer who once defeated Georges Carpentier and was often to be seen at the Baths at Llwynypia. He last appeared there at the fight between Tommy Noble and Billy Phillips, who now in Tonypandy is the Secretary of the Welsh B.B.B.C.

It is a jump from boxing to bowls, but the narrow valley of Rhondda has space for both, and men for both. There are women's bowling clubs as well as men's, and there is a Rhondda Municipal Parks

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Bowling League. Gelli Park would appear to be the meeting place for the game. Quoits has its patrons, too, in the summer months and the Rhondda Valley Quoits League has a championship table of twelve teams of whom Blaenllechau is easily the leader. Cycling is a favourite recreation for many Rhondda people, and although the roads of Rhondda are not very good for cycling it does not take long to get away into the countryside.

Horse racing is not so popular in Rhondda as in England although Chepstow races are not far away, but greyhound racing is eminently a local sport. There is a track at Porth and along the Rhondda roads one often comes across men exercising their dogs.

Cricket is a difficult sport in Rhondda owing perhaps to the difficulty of finding a level pitch. It is possible to play rugby (though not soccer) on almost any sort of a ground, but cricket needs a maximum of levelled, rolled and tended ground with ~~so~~ much grass upon it. Glamorgan is the only Welsh county in first class cricket, and only until a year or two ago did English people begin to respect it. This year Glamorgan cricket has done very well, and it has at last started to play on the edge of Rhondda at Pontypridd.

There are not many local 'rags', which, by the way, have as much news in them as some of the National Organs, which can report a first class cricket match in the area they cover. The *Rhondda Leader* has at last risen to this proud position. Warwickshire came at the end of June to play Glamorgan at Ynysanghardd

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Park at Pontypridd and if it had not been for the rain Glamorgan would have won the match instead of winning on the first innings. Maurice Turnbull, secretary and captain of the county club, recently said that for Glamorgan to run a successful team the season 'gates' for each match should realize not less than £250. The match at Pontypridd realized £400, in two days, representing an attendance of 8000. Pontypridd has now a claim to demand at least two of the home matches, and it seems that the Rhondda cricket enthusiast has the chance of going for a short bus ride to see some of the best cricket.

Rhondda has its own cricket league. To hear some of the shrill 'proletarians' talk it would appear that they have never seen Rhondda cricket played in the numerous parks. Yes, Rhondda has its parks. There is Gelligaled Park, Ynys Park, Garth Park, and Darran Park, to mention a few. The Rhondda women have started to play cricket and a women's team from the Methodist Central Hall humiliated a men's team in July by knocking up 84 runs against the poor men's 65. Mr. Rex Barker's successor to the Central Hall, Mr. Gwyther, is a fine cricketer, and after scoring a rapid 36 not out in a match last June went on to take the wickets of the Porth Electrical Workers' side to defeat them by over a hundred runs.

Lawn tennis is becoming popular. The Welsh Lawn Tennis Association arranges many of the matches and the game is played by numbers of people who would call themselves 'rabbits'. At Ystradfechan Park there

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are some interesting games to be seen and the cost of playing is as small as in the London parks. Hard courts are common and the Quakers have a fine one at their settlement at Trealaw.

Billiards are engaged in at the clubs and at the pubs, and the writer has seen some good matches at the Penygraig Conservative Club.

Dog breeding is attended to by a few Rhondda folk, and dog shows are held by the Porth and District Canine Society. In 1936 the brewery companies, who are the proper patrons, formed a darts' society which will be able to bring together some fine shots and some thrilling encounters which until recently were rather haphazard in their formation.

There are, no doubt, many other sports which are practised in Rhondda, and it would surprise many to know of Rhondda's croquet matches and the backgammon leagues. Certainly chess, draughts and dominoes are played, mostly in the pubs, and card games are enjoyed by the people in their homes, and the number of whist drives rivals that of any other part of the world. The art rather than the sport of swimming is growing particularly since new baths are being opened, and table tennis continues under the patronage of the unemployed clubs.

This is much more than a list of games and sports. It is a challenge to those who have warped ideas about Rhondda life as one of unalleviated gloom and misery or of unrivalled proletarian class consciousness. The habit of playing games is fatal to the spread of

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illegitimate class war, and a Rhondda Marxist would feel exceedingly bitter if the Tory billiards player were to address his cue at his Socialist opponent instead of at the ball. There is of course too much nonsense talked about 'playing the game' and 'cricket', as if games were capable of holding certain ethical qualities which could dominate the mind of man. But a man cannot easily beat another man at a game and proceed to beat him up afterwards.

CHAPTER XI

SOME RHONDDA STATISTICS

STATISTICS have an unworthy reputation of being dull. They are not really so, however, and can be made really interesting and important when they are related to life. So often statistics relating to the most vital matters are forced into the barred prisons of statistical tables, and while they are there, all the sap of life is dried out.

But statistics must go inside these prison moulds, even though they should be frequently let out for exercise. Rhondda statistics which have been so carefully compiled by industrial commissions and other philanthropic bodies are available for anyone who takes the trouble of wading through the numerous reports recently published by His Majesty's Stationery Office and the Industrial Survey Commission, and their importance and high value ought not in any way to be minimized. But they do not have any cogency unless they are assimilated with an appreciation of things as they are. And 'things as they are' cannot be squeezed into the tabular statement of a statistical inquiry. An example comes readily to hand. The three volumes of the Industrial Survey deal intimately with almost every branch of working industrial life in South Wales. And the comparative

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statistics of certain valleys tally closely with each other. Yet anyone from the impressionable visitor to the wariest native knows that, however much alike are the statistics, the actual characteristics of the different valleys are widely dissimilar. For example, one reads in the Industrial Survey of the relative heights of the valley and the surrounding hills of Rhondda and, say, the Aberdare valleys, and yet, although the elevation may appear very similar, their actual forms are quite unlike that of each other. With all this in mind, it is possible to derive a great help from the wealth of statistical information which the commissioners have made out.

From the point of view of the Industrial Survey, Rhondda includes the Rhondda Urban District, with a population of 134,600, the Pontypridd Urban District, with 41,240, and the Llantrisant and Llan-twit Fardre Rural District with 25,630. The Industrial Survey then characteristically divides this area into the areas covered by the six employment exchanges. These are, Ferndale in the little Rhondda, Treorchy at the north, and Tonypany at the middle of the larger Rhondda valley, Porth at the confluence of the two valleys, Pontypridd which is of course really outside Rhondda and a considerable town, and Tonyrefail in the Ely valley inside the Llantrisant rural district.

The preoccupation of employment and unemployment then drives the commissioners to examine the numbers of miners who are employed and unemployed.

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Outside the mining industry, there are very few industries employing many men. The workers in a huge bakery and a bacon-curing factory, the employees of the council, and the railway men comprise most of the other insurable workers of Rhondda.

In 1927 the six exchanges recorded 41,000 miners at work — most of them at Treorchy, Tonypany and Porth. In May 1934 that number had decreased to a little under 27,000, including 2300 temporarily stopped. That year was one of relenting but still intense depression throughout all the world, but the rising tide of prosperity did not affect Rhondda. In 1936 the Ferndale exchange reacted to the closing down of the local collieries, due to sanctions against Italy, and was mainly responsible for the total figure of 20,000 employed. In 1936 there were 5474 unemployed underground miners of the skilled order, and 7825 unskilled. The total, comprising surface workers as well, was 16,117. The total number of unemployed in all occupations was 22,783. Now that out of a total male population (and the figures of female unemployment are not noticed here) of 74,037 is pretty bad. When that unemployment figure is put side by side with the total adult male population of 53,222 (1931 census) it is very bad. Forty-two per cent of the insurable male population was unemployed and since the man is the Rhondda breadwinner as a rule it means that nearly every other proletarian family was living on unemployment benefit, or by the Means Test.

When the Rhondda miner took a cottage, he tried to

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take one near to his work. But this soon became impracticable for many Rhondda miners. Out of a total of nearly 3500 miners on the Pontypridd exchange, some 200 go some distance from Pontypridd to work, while over 450 men from the Treorchy district go south to the Tonypany area, and even as far as Pontypridd and Tonyrefail.

There is a continual but shifting supply of labour moving backwards and forwards between Rhondda and the other mining valleys. Once, more miners entered Rhondda than went out. In 1921, 7000 miners went into Rhondda daily to work in the mines. In 1936, 2000 go from Rhondda, while only 456 men now work in Rhondda from other districts, mostly from Taffs Wells and Pontyclun.

The present number of unemployed in Rhondda, including women, boys and girls, is 26,394, that is nineteen per cent of the whole population. That population was estimated at 134,394 in 1935, a drop of nearly 30,000 from the 1921 figures. There are, incidentally, 7000 fewer women than men. The reduction of the population involves the decline of the figures of men employed by 14,000 since 1927, owing chiefly to the complete unemployment of 26,000 men.

Only in the rural district of Llantrisant and Llantwit Fardre does the population show an increase. That is on account of the new housing estate there, and because of the system which prevails of giving relief work for short periods. In the agricultural south of that district there has actually been a dearth of labour due

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to the time-lag of the transference of agricultural labour northwards to the mines. But the increase is small — no more than six hundred from 1921 to 1933, though since 1933 it has more rapidly increased to well over a thousand. The Rhondda rates of 22s. 6d. in the pound, and the high scale of 8s. 9½d. for Public Assistance tend to offset the invitations made to employers to build factories in the district. There exists also, the profoundly wrong, but thoroughly understandable impression among employers that the Rhondda man is a natural agitator, and that his factory would be the seat of innumerable labour troubles. They are also troubled by the difficult roads and remoteness of Rhondda. Cardiff is 21 miles away from Rhondda, that is from Ystrad, where Rhondda's offices are. Newport is 27 miles distant, and Swansea is 28. The new Treforest estate, which lies between Nantgarw and Upper Boat, and is only 7 miles from Cardiff, is more likely to receive potential employers than Rhondda itself. There are sixty factory sites available there, which would give employment to five thousand workpeople. This and other trading estates outside Rhondda and outside the mining valleys proper would tend to divert Rhondda employment outside it, and that would mean that Rhondda people would become more prosperous, while the need for local industry would not be so great. Rhondda might even beautify herself.

One of the great difficulties in performing beauty treatment for Rhondda is that her skin is cracked and

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wrinkled. The mountain sides show great fissures down which unwary sheep fall never to come up again. After rain the paving stones on the hillside roads are pushed up against each other. No wonder an old 'witch' prophesied that the valley would resound with the crash of the overhanging mountains descending upon it. The commissioners report that afforestation schemes are going to be very difficult to carry out in Rhondda, partly because the cottages run so high up the hillsides, and partly because of the cracks, and partly because every available spot of bare land is used for allotments, small farms and holdings.

There are seventy-four acres of allotments in Rhondda. This does not include the kitchen gardens and the greenhouses which usually lie within them. These seventy-four acres are made up of 1180 holdings. That would make the average holding some one hundred and eighty square yards. Beside these are several quarter-acre farmlets, and poultry farms such as the one in the cleft behind the Trealaw park. Only fifteen years ago that cleft was a demi-paradise, with a rill running precipitously down waterfall and past watercress grounds and surrounded by wild violets. All that remains is the streamlet and the 'printing rock'. The ground once bestrewn with violets is now the bed of laying and clucking fowls.

Coming down the fissured sides of the Trealaw mountain towards the Trealaw park, it is strange to find the iron fence which in the most abrupt fashion separates the wildness of the mountain from the urbanity

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of the park. The iron fence is a sort of symbol of this abrupt change. It stands not merely to keep out sheep, and to mark out the park, but to express the boundaries of civilization and the primeval. It has one other office no doubt, namely to remind the children who go to the park that outside the boundary there is peril.

Rhondda has a larger proportion of children than most places. The schools have accommodation for no less than 27,000 children, and that does not account for those children who travel to Pontypridd, Cowbridge, and Cardiff, or for those over school age, who are not continuing their education at secondary, intermediate or technical schools. There are forty-one elementary and senior schools, four secondary schools, two intermediate schools, and five junior technical or instructional centres.

The children have had a bad time owing to the prevailing distress, and pathetic stories which speak also of native heroism are told of the efforts the children, the parents and the teachers have made to keep the light of education burning in youthful spirits. Rhondda families, although they are smaller than they used to be, are still bigger than the average English ones. The babies are usually carried about in a big shawl or blanket, 'Welsh fashion'. One Rhondda baby was thus once carried from Rhondda to Cornwall, and the Cornish villagers turned out to see 'the gipsy baby'! Marriage comes early to Rhondda young men and maidens as a rule. The early marriages of Rhondda

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folk are often frowned upon by English people, particularly the bourgeois philanthropists, who, since they do not participate in the local traditions and memory, as well as economic influences of history as well as environment, have little right to criticize.

It is the custom of bourgeois England to marry when the male has already achieved a certain amount of success in his career. Marriage is looked upon as the reward of waiting, the proper prize of the male who has found his niche in the economic order. In some greater or less degree this conception of marriage has permeated the English working class, and even the aristocracy, but it has not yet had much effect on Welsh tradition. The Rhondda boy and girl begin their advance in the economic order with marriage. Marriage is not held as a sort of worldly sugar plum or jujube, but as part of the battle of life. This has its good as well as its bad points. As things are, the chances are that the newly married Rhondda couple are going to face very much more hardship in life and, moreover, face the criticism that they are 'marrying on the dole'. The criticism involves a gross disregard for the proper subordination of ends. What is to be held as the more important and final matter in life, the balancing of budgets, or the conservation of the traditions of the people? Strictly speaking they ought to go together, but if they cannot the latter must take precedence. Youthful marriages bring out qualities in the married that cannot be brought out in the staid and more prosperous middle-aged. And the children are more

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numerous, and healthier as a rule. The modern custom of 'the only child' does not project much into Rhondda habits, though if anglicized habits persist much longer it will soon be untrue to speak of the large Rhondda family.

What is to become of these Rhondda children is a common enough question. Many of them leave Rhondda for 'foreign parts', but others stay at home.

Rhondda children, like most Welsh children, enjoy the advantages of an excellent education which is probably better than the average education given to English children. The poorest Rhondda child has the chance of going first to the secondary school after passing the necessary examination, and from thence to the University of Wales, either at Cardiff, or Aberystwyth, or perhaps to Bangor. Others proceed to the English universities, while Jesus College, Oxford, has always allowed so many places to Welshmen. The result is that Rhondda miners — many of them out of work — point with pride to sons and daughters, and often brothers, who have a scholastic education. Once while lunching with a statistical officer of a London utility undertaking, I saw this feature of Welsh life illustrated clearly. With a kind of personal pride the man informed me that his father, brother, and most of his relations were coal miners in South Wales, and tended to look upon himself as having chosen a less honourable profession.

In a valley supported by the perilous work of the

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coal miner the hospital has a prominent place. First among Rhondda's hospitals comes St. Mary's, Llwynypia, once the Central Homes, and now the chief and largest hospital in Rhondda. Like little satellites are the cottage hospitals at Porth, Pentwyn, and Treherbert which were instituted and are maintained by the miners themselves. Then come the special hospitals. There is the maternity and child clinic at Trealaw, the fever hospital and smallpox adjunct at Pen Rhŷs, and a small fever hospital at Tonyrefail. Mental cases go to Bridgend or Whitchurch, near Cardiff, and tuberculosis cases to Glanely, near Cardiff, or even so far away as Brecon.

Special contributions are made to the Cardiff infirmary by the miners, and there are numerous nursing homes in Cardiff for those who can afford their extra charges.

The main thing to remember about Rhondda statistics is that they are the record of a series of economic catastrophies. Rhondda industrialism has no roots, and Rhondda industrialism seems to be going. The quicker the worst of it goes, the better. At the base of sudden and huge changes in the economic prosperity of Rhondda is something permanent. Rhondda society is compounded of an ancient population and civilization and a new and much bigger one which has comparative impermanency. And an Industrial Survey can only study this latter. It cannot study Rhondda, but only Rhondda Labour Exchanges. It is quite likely that the only man who can begin to

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understand Rhondda is the prophet and he will have to be one of those supermen known as saints.

LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN RHONDDA VALLEYS 1936

	<i>Insured Persons</i>	<i>Percentage Unemployed</i>
Ferndale	5,990	55.9
Porth	8,410	32.5
Pontypridd	12,110	40.1
Treorchy	15,530	24.3
Tonypandy	10,550	41.4
Tonyrefail	4,560	25.3

CHAPTER XII

IMPERIAL RHONDDA

WHEN pilgrims came to visit the Holy Well of our Lady of Pen Rhŷs they served to remind this generation that Rhondda in the Middle Ages was more truly international than Europe is to-day. Pilgrims do still travel across Europe by express train and across England by motor coach, but there is nothing in contemporary Europe which corresponds to the medieval pilgrimage. That was part of a great sense men had that although the smallest social groups preserved their own authentic characteristics, there was a fundamental common ground in which men of every nation and clime could meet for common ends. That was an internationalism which has probably gone by now, and it was a very real thing.

The pilgrims have not come to the Holy Well for many weary years now; instead another band of pilgrims came, not indeed to increase their spiritual stores and to give alms, or to be lowered to the waters of a well, but to get jobs and to get money and to be lowered into a coal mine. No doubt there are still those who would call that progress, but it is a kind of progress that has dirtied Rhondda, given no direct spiritual help to the pilgrims and has left them penniless. The Holy Well still remains and will remain long

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after the mines have become ruins, and that is the rule for holy places. It would not be entirely inadequate to look at Rhondda as a vast camp of industrial pilgrims. It would then bring forth the question, 'Where do the pilgrims go when they have made their pilgrimage?' The time for a general exodus has not yet come, but already many have begun to leave.

Hardly any return to old homes, for most of them were born in Rhondda, but they are busy making new homes and they are succeeding in fighting a fairly popular fallacy that Rhondda people are ne'er-dowells, and they are slowly building up a Rhondda Empire. There is a Rhondda man now running a chemist's shop in Honolulu, there are Rhondda folk in Australia and Canada, and there are Rhondda folk most everywhere. Stanley, the explorer, commented on the Welsh genius for emigration when he told of his experience on reaching an African village where no white man to his knowledge had ever been, and of his surprise when a compatriot came up to his boat and sold him some bootlaces.

Here are some letters which have reached the editor of a Rhondda newspaper from exiles, as Rhondda tends to call them:

From a Canadian Exile:

Dear Scrounger,

In answer to your appeal for a word from exiles from the Rhondda, I guess you will be surprised to have a word from Canada. I left Penygraig twelve years ago

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for this country, but have kept in touch with the Rhondda through this journal which is sent me week by week by my brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Davies, 67 Edmunstown Road, Penygraig.

Of course we have always been readers ever since it was printed by Messrs. Evans and Short. After we read it, we send it on to friends in British Columbia. We often feel sorry that Rhondda is neglected by the country, but we do hope that something will be done in the near future, Yours etc.,

Stephen Davies.

R R 6 Woodstock, Carl C., Canada.

Here is another from Australia:

Sir,

Being a regular recipient of your valuable local paper, and having a host of friends in the Rhondda Valley who would be delighted to read a few lines from one who never forgets the Homeland, I would deem it a favour to have the privilege of expressing my appreciation of a paper so full of interesting items regarding the religious, economic, and sporting sides of the valleys in the Welsh hills.

Having left the Rhondda at the inception of the worldwide depression, which seems to have hit the valleys with such terrific force, I still have an ambition to return some day, in order to renew those old friendships which are still held in my own heart.

Although being so far away from home, you will realize that we are still 'in' the Rhondda, having so

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many friends here who happen to be natives of the same old valley; for instance, as a next-door neighbour, we have a brother of the late Mr. Griff Maddocks, one-time miners' agent for the Rhondda No. 1 District of the S.W.M.F. Dai Maddocks, of course, hails from the Trehafod District. His friends at home will be glad to know that he is the same old Dai as of old; nothing worries him, but he is a stickler for the land of his fathers.

Other Welsh stalwarts near by are Mr. and Mrs. Octavius Rees, formerly of Porth. Mrs. Rees at one time was a schoolmistress at the Cymmer (Porth) School. Then we have not far away a Llwynypia lad named Ivor Davies, of Ivor Haul Street, Llwynypia, late of the Mid-Rhondda Operatic Society. Ivor, I am pleased to say, is doing as well as can be expected and would delight his old friends Jack Heycock and others with tales of his travels throughout the country. Anyhow, we are all a merry company when we meet together.

Some time ago I had the privilege of a few hours' company with that Welsh Rugby wizard, Emlyn Jenkins, Treherbert, who made a great name for himself and upheld the traditions of the old invincibles on the playing fields out here. What a wonderful few hours we spent. Indeed, he increased my longing to return to Tonypandy; nevertheless, my visit is still in the making.

Now a few words to the bowling fraternity of the Rhondda. I am pleased to read in your paper that you

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have so many clubs in the district and quite a number of enthusiasts in the game. Being a bowler, naturally I am interested in the success of the various clubs. Especially am I delighted to notice that Jenkin Williams, Penygraig, has risen to the exalted position of president of the W.B.A. My heartiest congratulations, Mr. Williams, and best wishes for the success of your association.

Without any personal boast, I would like you to know that I happen to be the secretary of a club which has the unique distinction of having all grades, A, B and C, taking part in either the final or semi-final in the district competitions. The 'B' grade have to-day won the final of their section, and now visit Sydney as representatives of the Northern district in the State final. This team of four rinks has gone through a series of fourteen games undefeated, with a point score of a total of 656 up, which you will agree is a wonderful performance.

No doubt bowlers at home are well aware of the forthcoming Empire championships being staged at Sydney in 1938. I would be delighted to know if any of the Rhondda leaders in the game propose making the journey. For those who have the means I would recommend the trip out here.

Having read reports of the doings of the Tonypandy Central Hall, I am pleased to know that the Rev. Cyril Gwyther is continuing the good work begun by his predecessor, the Rev. Mr. Barker, who did so much for the relief of the distressed of the Rhondda. Being

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a foundation member of that institution which has now developed into a mock parliament, I extend to the leaders of such an organization my best wishes for its continued success. I had the pleasure of reading that recently published book, *The Rhondda Roundabout*, by Jack Jones, and I must express my delight in the manner in which he depicts the numerous characters which he typifies. It was delightful reading for one who spent his early days in and around those Welsh hills and coal tips (by the way, what a contrast between the hills of the Rhondda Valleys and the wide open spaces of N.S.W.!).

I might say that I receive your valuable paper regularly through the courtesy of my family at home, and may they continue their good work.

If by any chance this letter may meet the eyes of any of my old friends, particularly one of my old Trealaw school-teachers, Mr. Jack Phillips or Mr. Griff Davies, not forgetting, of course, my mathematics teacher Mr. W. H. Owen, Ynyswen, I would be more than pleased to receive a line or two from any of them.

In conclusion, here's wishing your paper continued success, and hoping for better days ahead for the Rhondda Valleys. — Yours etc.,

Edgar J. Buckley.

'Rhondda', Glover Street, Belmont,
New South Wales, Australia.

Then there are many sons of Rhondda who have gone to the United States of America, and they are

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just one of the waves of Welsh emigrants in that land. Pennsylvania with its coal mines would appear to be one of the notable goals for the American bound Rhondda man, and some of the towns of Pennsylvania have distinctly Welsh sounding names such as Nanticoke.

From time to time a Rhondda man achieves some such distinction as the following news paragraph would indicate:

NATIVE OF PENTRE

APPOINTED TOWN CLERK OF BLACKPOOL

Mr. Trevor T. Jones, aged 35, a native of Pentre, son of Councillor Daniel Jones, was on Wednesday last appointed town clerk of Blackpool at a salary of £1500, rising to £2000.

Then one hears of the death of a Rhondda man such as Johnnie Beynon, Trehafod, in Johannesburg while touring with a football team. And then again some Rhondda singers like Ben Davies achieve international fame. From Trealaw a young girl named Ceinwen John went out to relatives in the United States who trained her naturally fine voice. She specializes in singing Jewish songs and helps in the services of a synagogue. In 1936 she returned to Trealaw after singing on the radio.

London and South-East England receives by far the biggest quota of Rhondda emigrants. London has had waves of Welsh invaders ever since they were driven out in Saxon times. Stow records that in the fifteenth

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century there were Welsh milkmen in London, and during the last century numbers of Welshmen from Cardigan and North Wales settled down to monopolize the milk trade of London. The men who have come from Rhondda in recent years are not to be placed in the same category as these prosperous merchants. Most of them came in sheer desperation to get any sort of job at any wage. They worked as navvies, as lorry drivers, or as labourers. Some of the younger men, most of them mere boys, were apprenticed to various London trades. The gas companies took some, a few big firms of Welsh drapers took others, and the hotels took many more. Some of the more fortunate young married couples took over jobs as housekeepers and gardener-chauffeurs. The young girls went into nursing and domestic service. It was this latter matter which caused some scandal some years back. Mixed motives prompted some persons to employ little Rhondda girls of fourteen years or so at a pittance, and it was no wonder that many of them went morally astray. It became frequent to hear Londoners running down the morals of these Rhondda girls, and on inquiry they would produce their evidence of young Rhondda girls who had come to London and had almost immediately 'gone wrong'. The charge of immorality in its narrowest and in its widest sense rests not on those children of poverty but on the skinflints — Rhondda rebels have a stronger name — who treated them so badly.

Rhondda lived that scandal down. A little time ago

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some girls were chosen from Rhondda and South Wales to be London mannequins. The Rhondda girl is not suffering so much now from the great depression, and she will dictate her terms rather than endure that domestic service which was not far removed from slavery. London people grew slowly to recognize the Rhondda folk in its midst. The girls are generally brunettes with a warmth of colouring which is a reminder of their proportion of Mediterranean blood, but sometimes they are remarkably fair; that is when the Celtic characteristics dominate. The men are not so dark as the women. They are mostly rather short, and lean, and their long heads stoop perkily forward. Groups of four or five of them may be seen in the streets of the big cities singing their favourite Welsh hymns.

There must be many Rhondda Welshmen who are eking out a living in London by forming a little male voice choir and touring the busy central streets of London. They do not sing like the average street mendicant singer. They usually stand in a sort of semi-circle, with heads slightly bent towards each other, and then take a sudden and deep breath before beginning. The whole voice is used, and a close observer would notice that the muscles of the body seem to participate in the production.

The Kent coalfield attracts other Rhondda men. During and after the Great Strike, the writer met many a man from Rhondda either plodding his way through the Cotswolds or at rest under the railway bridge at Charing Cross, on his way to Dover where he believed

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employment would be readily found. Many got no farther than London, but some did manage to reach the new coalfield.

There is now hardly a suburb of London which has not its Rhondda population. Of late in a certain shopping centre of London where the accents of Cockaigne once ruled, there are now to be heard the milder and tonal accents of Tonypany. Even some of the south coast seaside resorts betray the same silent infiltration of Rhondda. At Hayling Island, for example, hundreds of men from South Wales were working on the new estates and roads a few years ago, and although that sort of work ends and many of the men go elsewhere, some remain.

This eastward march of Siluria meets with numerous counter attacks. The London worker felt justifiably angry some years back to find that his livelihood was imperilled by 'a set of Taffies who were not much more than blacklegs'. It was not much use telling him that the Rhondda man had almost lost all sense of wage standards owing to the collapse of industry in his valley. It did happen that many unemployed London workers found that the jobs they wanted were being snapped up by Rhondda men who hardly cared what the wages were, so long as they had enough to exist on. But the Rhondda industrial tradition is eminently hostile to blacklegism and her people hate the suggestion that they are blacklegs. In time that tradition will reassert itself. It has indeed already. But tremendous harm has been done by the happenings of the past

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decade in reinforcing that popular delusion that Taffy is a thief.

Welshmen the world over are passionately fond of forming sodalities. There are in England scores of Welsh societies and leagues, ranging from the stately Cymrodorion and the county societies to recent little groups of poorer men such as the new Rhondda circle at Southampton with some thirty members. This latter society meets two or three times a week, and the members continue their old interests in church 'ddrama', concerts, small eisteddfodau, and social functions.

Slough, owing to the post-war trading estate which has transformed the comparatively small pre-war town-village of Upton-cum-Chalvey into a big town, has received a very large number of Rhondda people. The Stoke Poges road and Burnham houses most of them.

This wide-scale distribution is not likely to have very much effect on the world for some time. But since it is going on year by year, the census returns are going to provide strange reading. In predominantly English districts there will be large aggregations of Welsh speaking people — certainly Welsh people — or people with Welsh habits and customs, and it would not be surprising to find their influence considerable. The Welsh accent is very catching, and the result of a moderately long exodus of Welshmen into England would mean that the Welsh inflection would spread in such districts as East Kent. Already old Slough

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residents say that the speech of Slough is growing 'Welshy'. The intermingling of blood would also create new situations in many places. One would expect to find the stature decreasing, and the emergence of a Saxon-Celtic-Iberian type, with darker features and with high cheek-bones.

The arrival of a people with industrial history utterly different from those around has already had its effects, some of which are not healthy. The Rhondda folk bring a militant mind into industrial affairs, and still look upon their new employers with that expression of proletarian insurgence which is usual enough in Rhondda but which is so out of place elsewhere. On the other hand they are quick, and set the pace for the slower witted Saxon. In time, the militant attitude will disappear as they begin to appreciate a quite different industrial environment, but the danger is that they will bequeath to the future industrial order that 'Celtic' characteristic which stops a man from grumbling until after he has revolted. But if the more lethargic Englishman is infused with a spirit of revolt, and becomes less dependable, he will be much more interesting.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RHONDDA COLLIER

If you are coming with my neighbour, the Rhondda miner, to watch him at his work, you will have to get up early. He rises at five o'clock as he works the morning shift. He lights his fire, has a customary morning swear or grumble, and after breakfast he gives me a knock on my front door at about ten minutes past six. This time I am ready for him and you had better be ready too, as we have to hurry towards 'Pandy Square, where our Rhondda miner (we'll call him Dai) buys his daily baccy — a strong shag — and then towards Clydach where stands the colliery we are visiting. At a quarter to seven Dai is in the lamp room where all the lamps are issued, and before seven he is ready to enter the cage.

If he arrives punctually at seven, he may find the cage either gone down or ready to start, and he may be turned back, so that no miner dares to waste the morning's precious time. The cage holds twenty-eight miners and it descends into the mine with very great care. Almost always, the shifts are so arranged that when one shift is descending, another is ascending.

When Dai arrives at the bottom he reports to the fireman and after examining his lamp most carefully

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he travels to the coal face. There is very little light here, for the lamp gives a bare minimum sufficient merely for the work. Here at the coal face, our Dai usually has another 'swear' or grumble, after which he would guess the time at about half-past seven. Dai is a collier. That is he mines coal. In Rhondda this is chiefly done with a pneumatic pick, a contraption similar to those wicked engines which disturb the peace of the retired colonels of Kensington. Sometimes a coal cutting machine is employed and then the collier becomes a coal cutter.

Now Dai's job is to cut four feet six inches of coal with his 'puncher' — the title he gives to his pneumatic drill. This width is the gauge of the conveyer belt which runs by the coal face. Every day this belt has to be moved to the next coal face and another four feet six inches has to be cut again. Dai throws his coal on to the belt which moves towards the tram. He must be careful to cut large coal for he receives no return for the small coal. Dai does not himself move the belt. That is done by 'wage men' who arrive in the afternoon shift with other shifters, and leave about half-past ten at night.

The night shift brings the repair men underground at a quarter to eleven, and all night long until a little after six the mine undergoes a pretty complete overhaul.

Dai has been working hard for about three hours, and he now begins to think of his Tommy Box and Jack (water bottle) and the twenty minutes' break.

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The Tommy Box is a provision box. Almost¹ always it contains bread and cheese, though sometimes he will vary the menu. The break over, Dai works until about ten minutes past two when with his fellow workers he ascends the pit for a short meal time. Then back to the lamp room he goes and hands in his lamp. The buses are running at this time of day, and special buses, and trains for that matter, are run for the begrimed miners. Dai is covered in coal dust but he knows that by about four o'clock he will be having his daily bath in the kitchen. Sometimes he bathes at the pithead baths, but this depends largely on the weather, the distance home, the probable crowd in his kitchen, and the nature of the road he is to travel on. Sometimes when he is working in a ventilating draught of some intensity, the mine will be quite cold, so that then he will not have, as he often does have, to work in a pair of shorts and a singlet, but if he is in a deep pit, such as those at Senghenydd and Treharris, he will be in a close, hot atmosphere. The miner has to judge carefully all these factors, as each will seriously modify his decision to take a pithead bath. The ideal has to be left to the miner's judgment.

There are, of course, many other classes of miners besides the collier and the 'wage men'. The chief of each 'district' is called the fireman. Some 'districts' or parts of the mine have strange names, a favourite one being the Spion Kop, which is also given to tips. Collieries have queer names too, and there are three in Rhondda known as the Hook, Squint and Eye. The

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fireman is, among the miners, a man who is a sort of boss. His immediate successor is the under-manager, and he has a tremendous amount of local power. In quite another category come the 'timber boys' who are brawny drawers — not hewers — of wood. The hewers of wood are timbermen, and they are craftsmen. Timberboys are men with brawn. Rhondda uses wooden props rather than steel because the pits are deep and the pressure is very great. A steel prop would hold well for a time, but it would suddenly collapse without warning. A wooden prop would give plenty of warning and it could be quickly replaced. When the ground is settled, that is when there is an evenness about the roof and sides, the Rhondda miner uses a species of iron girder which he calls 'rings'.

Then there are the engine-men stationed at the 'double parting', the place where the tram lines join, the 'shacklers' and the 'shunters' and the 'riders'. Their occupations all relate to the trams and belt. The engine-man is responsible for the belt, the shacklers and the shunters attend to the couplings and the shunting of the trams, and the riders are the tram drivers.

When there appears a succession of riders at the pit bottom, the coal is taken off the trams and put into the cage, which will hold two trams of coal. It takes less time for this to ascend to the surface than for the men. One minute is quite a good average time for a cage filled with miners to ascend in a Mid-Rhondda pit, but it will take only a half or three-quarters of a minute when laden with coal.

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All the coal is weighed by a company weigher, who gets quite a decent but not high wage for his work. But when he has weighed each man's work, it is checked by a man known as the checkweigher. This man belongs to a very special class of people. It is a class which owns a tremendous amount of political and economic power in the coal industry. It exists on the shoulders of the colliers themselves who contribute to its support. An average checkweighman's wage is £6 a week. Not very exorbitant perhaps, and you will probably add that it is well worth it, since the collier is assured of a square deal in having his coal re-weighed by his own nominee. If it were merely that, of course, there would be nothing more to say. But it is not all. The checkweighman is, *ipso facto*, a trade union official. He is a member of an oligarchy, and he is generally on the march for political power. It would be easy to name men who began their political career as checkweighmen. Hardly a coal area exists which has not its Labour councillors who are or were once checkweighmen. Rhondda has at least one now; South Wales has several. In effect, then, the checkweighman is a political personage, a sort of sub-agent of the Labour Party. It is useless, of course, to pretend that there is any real difference between the Labour Party and the trade unions. There are a few individual trades unionists who belong to other political parties, and there are a few thousand communists in Rhondda who belong to the Miners' Federation. But these men are in a minority. At Maerdy a little while ago the

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communists secured one of their own men as a checkweighman, but this again was an exception. As a rule, the checkweighman is 'a moderate man' and all that that implies. The Rhondda miner is careful to choose one whose probity is above question, and a man who will at the same time guard the interests of the workers. Yet it is a great pity that the checkweighman has all the status and function of a trade union Whig, since he binds the miners to what can often amount to a grave tyranny — trade unionism charged with political bias.

On Tuesday or Wednesday, the checkweighman hands each collier and cutter a check slip which gives the amount of coal he has cut during the working week. The collier then knows what his wage will be, but if he considers a mistake has been made he can bring his case before the checkweighman who must go into the matter. Pay day arrives with a docket most elaborately described with numerous debits and credits. On the credit side is the weight of coal cut, the timber props laid, the rubbish cleared, and if the collier has done an odd job that is added in. On the debit side are certain charges for the colliery doctor, the checkweighmen who get sixpence each, special contributions to colliery services and the Sick Fund, besides the deductions for unemployment and health insurance. Some collieries own the miners' cottages, so that there are deductions for light and rent. Sometimes a miner has to buy (he is not actually compelled to buy) a miner's hat, an affair shaped like the

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army tin hats. Sometimes the miner buys his boots at the colliery. Very good boots they are at ten shillings a pair, and they can be bought in four payments of half a crown a week. From time to time one of the controversial deductions is demanded (demanded is a strong word but not so inaccurate). This is the deduction for the Miners' Federation lodge.

After the collier has returned home and bathed he sits down to a cooked dinner at about five o'clock. This in many Rhondda homes besides those of miners is the chief meal hour of the day. Yet owing to the three shifts and the extraordinarily varied hours of other trades beside coal-mining, Rhondda's meal times are most irregular. It is for this reason that the kitchen is an important place, for there, in a home where perhaps two members are miners on different shifts, and perhaps two other members at school, and even another member at work in a shop, the home is one succession of meals. Washing-up goes on all the day and almost all the night in some Rhondda homes. Sunday is in Rhondda more of a day of rest than elsewhere, and the Sabbatarian rigour is justified by the weekly strain of work. Sunday does set forth an orderly succession of meals, but even then the pits are not still, and work continues, though with diminished vigour.

The Rhondda miner has many recreations, but he chiefly loves to be about with his fellows and his family, and like most miners he loves the daylight. On Sunday and other holidays, when the

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weather is good, the miner loves to walk upon the mountains on each side of the valley. Clad in his Sunday best, he presents a strange spectacle against the rough and rugged fissured slopes. He goes there to catch the sun which he is so hungry for. When the Great Strike and the depression of 1931 came, the Rhondda collier began to take up what he still calls 'odd jobs'. This meant gardening, pig and poultry keeping, allotment work, and the raising of greenhouses. It is a strong belief of the Rhondda miner that he ought to keep on with these odd jobs, in case another depression comes. Whatever be the reason he is moving definitely towards becoming a small proprietor, and if many Rhondda miners succeed in becoming small peasant proprietors, the socialist nostrums will cease to captivate them. Tories they will become, if not in name, in fact.

Unfortunately there has been some very irritating restrictions on this move towards peasant proprietorship. Not long ago a London syndicate began purchasing some Rhondda ground-rents, and there are scores of Rhondda families who hardly know where they stand in regard to building greenhouses, pigsties, and chicken coops. As this matter is *sub judice*, perhaps some solution of a happy kind may be found. But it would be exceedingly dangerous for a body of financiers to intrude into an area which is, or should be, intransigently and militantly disposed towards yet another example of whiggish money-power.

Dai's work is not quite so perilous as that of other

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miners in the soft coal areas. In the Glyn Nant coal area towards Swansea, the coal is of the anthracite variety, and there is next to no damp or gas in the mine. Here instead of lifting coal by the cage, it is sent up in a device called a 'slant'. The coal is very near the surface of the earth, and it is comparatively clean. The Rhondda steam coal is a variety by no means so tarry and soft as the house coal of Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire. Next to the anthracite beds it is the freest from gas, but still explosions—terrible explosions—do happen, and subsidence is always to be feared owing chiefly to the great depth of the mine.

The Rhondda miner has his good share of fortitude and nerve. It is largely a traditional occupation which develops a special aptitude. Yet it is strange to find a Rhondda miner who spent his early years gardening for the gentlefolk of Dorset. It is stranger still to find that he revels in his work—'wouldn't exchange my job for any you'd think of giving me'. No doubt a particular form of work which, abstractedly, is more or less servile and undesirable is a good and free action in real life. It possesses its own rhythm; its own psychological values; it bears on the spiritual ends to which the worker is directed, and work even of the servile kind can be and is continually accepted heroically and joyously as part of the discipline of the soul.

It is here that Marxist socialism blunders so damnably.

The traditionalist must recognize the claims of

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labour, particularly the labour of the miner, and the objection which the traditionalist has to uncivilized industrialism is that it turns the relationships of men into the relationships of things, but if ever men are to acquire relations with each other, it is fundamental that they should be given a vision of each other's souls. The Marxist displays an ardour and an application to economic affairs which is doubtless admirable. But the traditional mind alone has the secret of men, and the mystery of their day labour.

The Rhondda collier's wife has all her husband's fortitude, but for her it is of the conservative kind. She is like the fisherman's wife in storing up within herself enormous reserves of patience and that strange feminine courage which can be so truly awful and fine. She is careful to keep a kettle boiling on the fire; she always has her husband's bed made ready in case of need. On her falls the economic burdens. If there is a strike she has to work out the family budget in a way that almost rivals the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and if worse times befall, and first 'the dole' and then the Public Assistance are the only means of subsistence, she is slow to unload those hidden stores which she alone knows how to keep. A century ago women worked with the men in the mines, and worked there until quite recent times in some of the lighter occupations. There is still living in Rhondda a woman who worked at one time in one of the Merthyr pits. To-day the Rhondda miner's wife is still at work in the coal industry, since were it not for her, her husband

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and sons would be hard put to the unbearable strain of the shift and the home work. Sometimes the wife cracks under her task. Sickness or babies come, and only some almost unfathomable instinct drives the Rhondda miner to his work and livelihood.

After a period — often a long period — of unemployment, the miner goes back to work which taxes him to the limit of his endurance. When a man is on the dole hands grow soft, muscles relax, and the craft itself is partly lost after so many months, or years. This is one of the agonizing problems of the slight return to prosperity.

To the calvinistically minded it might well appear that some fairy ring of fate was encircling the human will and baffling its heroic fight. Very often the Rhondda miner collapses after weeks of endurance. Then comes sickness, and the old story of unemployment and poverty. Truly the problem of unemployment is far more than a problem of economics since it involves the problem of how to maintain technical efficiency, and how to maintain morale and good health.

Rhondda has learned not to despise the unemployed person. In arriving, however bewilderingly, at a respect for him it has approached the Greek regard for the man of leisure. The unemployed man is a man of leisure, and except for the value of work in itself and for the soul of man, the leisured man is in a position which society ought to estimate at its right worth. One of the paradoxes of Rhondda is that at the deepest

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sorrow of her life, there appeared the potential aristocrat, the man of leisure. He began often to behave aristocratically too. He patronized arts and sciences, and produced in his pain a life of ease. The aristocratic type cannot be regimented into a social class. A bourgeois is always a bourgeois; if a man is a proletarian only he cannot be anything else. But the aristocrat is to be found in all social classes, he is now emerging from the proletariat and is becoming slowly capable of taking the place of the oligarchy.

Against this aristocrat, all the checkweighmen, trade union officials, mugwump members of important committees, and puritans — religious and political — are powerless. He is the constant and abiding element which gives a society its justification as a body ordered to something finer than self protection, or prosperity.

In the future his aristocratic descendants will rebuild Rhondda. That is a far more certain prophecy than is the 'democratic' dream of the socialist, or the messianic hope of the Marxist.

CHAPTER XIV

RHONDDA TO-MORROW

THE way of the prophet is an apparently easy way, but it is very crowded. There are plenty of people who, like Karl Marx, take hold of a thing which has happened and is happening more and more frequently or with greater intensity and then announce that it is going to happen with even greater frequency or intensity. Thus Marx saw a class war going on in his day and twisted and distorted history and the doubtful details of pre-history to suit his preconceived theory of history, which would appear to be seducing middle-class intellectuals of to-day with the same facility as the *laissez-faire* doctrines of Mr. Cobden seduced their grandfathers in the last century. To accuse the Rhondda folk of capitulating to Marxism is rather foolish when Marxism has at last become a respectable creed for university undergraduates and the sons of prosperous tradesmen.

There are of course so many theories of history that the air resounds with that over-zealous jangle of cries and counter-cries which are better fitted for a religious controversy. But meanwhile the people of Rhondda and most people do what the Apocrypha said they would always do, 'maintain the state of the world'.

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They¹ do not pretend to understand Marxism any more than their grandfathers really understood philosophic radicalism, or their ancestors the precise point about the divine right of kings or the claims of parliamentary government. But Marxism is even more remote than is the pedantry of divine right because it is concerned with an abstraction called the proletariat which no one can see as men could see a king who governed and who, like Charles II, kept his person constantly before his subjects.

The present political mind of Rhondda is wedded — and not happily so — to the pallid spouse of Labour trade unionism. The overwhelming concern for coal and coal getting which provides the teachers, the tradesmen, and the bus conductors with one of their main reasons for being in Rhondda, means that any social project is at once related to the precise object for which the present Rhondda exists. Thus few Rhondda people think that their general advocacy of nationalization has any other reference than to coal. They would probably be astonished if the Italian ice cream merchants of Rhondda were asked to deliver up their shops with or without compensation to the State and if the Rhondda ice cream were sold from a government office. In the same way the general Rhondda view that the 'capitalist system' is all wrong means merely that Rhondda objects to the private ownership of coal mines, and particularly to the existence of mining royalties. How far the clamour for nationalization after the Bill for the state ownership of

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those royalties is passed will abate is doubtful, but the spirit of root and branch which inspired the men who demanded and got Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales is so strong that nothing short of actual nationalization will satisfy the mass of Rhondda people. At the same time there is going on in the world a very rapid transition from the barbarism of *laissez-faire* to a more conservative social order. The Rhondda man, shut in by his hills and remote from the activity of London, does not quite realize this. There are many Rhondda people who cannot see the growing concern successive conservative governments have for a benevolent social order, and they do not see that conservatism itself is no friend but rather an enemy of unrestricted capitalism. For that matter, the conservative sees a scheme such as nationalization with no great fear. But the conservative would not foist it upon men without being sure that it was eminently practical and would have nothing to do with it as an idealistic scheme of things.

Nationalization in coal is however attacked by the Welsh Nationalists who incorporate coal in their plan for a Bwrdd Cydweithredol Cyhoeddus, a kind of Co-operative Public Utility Board which is not unlike the syndicates of Italian Fascism. This corporative scheme would spring from the Welsh Development Council which would direct all Welsh economic affairs. Already there exists a South Wales Industrial Development Council with offices in Cardiff, and the Welsh Nationalist argues that it ought to be expanded

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into a council for all Wales. The New Estate at Treforest, the first of many future planned estates of the same kind, is also likely to be the nucleus of a new prosperity for Rhondda. Recently a young German arrived at Treforest to train a hundred unemployed men at a new leather factory there. Raw skins of a South American animal found in swamps are to be imported and made into chrome leather for shoes, hand bags, and fine leather articles. This factory is only one of the many additional enterprises which the new Treforest estate has initiated. Production began there the first week in July 1937, with five manufacturing tenants. Four more factories were then being built or planned. The first factory to produce goods was that of a firm manufacturing steel reinforcement for concrete. A paper mill employing five hundred men started in 1937. The other factories include a chemical works, an electric storage battery plant, and one for the manufacture of type writing ribbons and carbons.

All this government aided private enterprise is part of the spirit of the present transitional period — one which the Victorian Marx did not appear to envisage, and one which would make Cobden turn in his grave. Treforest is one of the good signs of the times. It is especially good for Rhondda. The growth of an estate such as Treforest means that a coal-mining valley like Rhondda will lose her coal-governed characteristics, and will enjoy within her boundaries a number of distributive trades which will give to her people a more

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balanced mode of life, and which will help to put into its proper place the overwhelming supremacy of the oligarchs of the coal-mining industry.

For some years to come, Rhondda and other South Wales mining valleys will be governed by an oligarchy of trade unionism. The Miners' Federation as a trade union has of course its proper rights and privileges, but the existence of a closed corporation such as the Miners' Federation in a valley in which there exists no other main industry than coal mining means that local and parliamentary government is at the beck and call of the union. All over those parts of England where the same kind of industrial life exists, the same practice prevails. In the days of rotten boroughs and patronized counties, the influence of the local Tory squire or whig landowner was paramount. The same principle is apparent in Rhondda. But introduce other industries besides coal, and the scales will become even. The Miners' Federation will no longer rule the Rhondda roost, but will take its normal and proper share in political activity.

This evening up of industrial influences will be accentuated by the declining population. The emigration of the past ten years, particularly that of young girls, and the decline of the large Rhondda family, together with the gradual rise in the Catholic population, means that the industrial and crowded Rhondda — a fit subject for the wiles of agitators, and demagogues, will become thinned, and the Catholics will become an important minority with a strong anti-Marxist bias.

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A population of 200,000, counting the two Rhondda valleys, has declined by over thirty per cent in the last few years, and although it does not diminish now by more than 6000 each year, the time will shortly come when the lack of young people will cause a sudden fall in marriages and in the birth rate. Then Rhondda will present the extreme example of a spectacle which is haunting the whole of Britain, that of a childless race. But the Catholics continue to breed well in Rhondda, and since Catholicism in Rhondda now affects the Welsh inhabitants as well as the Irish and Italians, Rhondda is likely to have in the near future a powerful native Catholic group with perhaps more children than the rest of the inhabitants. The possibility is not remote, and some Rhondda Protestants are alive to it.

A population which might not exceed 50,000 in about thirty or forty years in a valley devoted to coal mining and distributive trades as well as horticulture and some agriculture would be very different from a population four times as large congregated in the same area and having no other industry than coal. The Rhondda coal miner in days to come will have a very different mode of living from his present one. He may continue to mine coal, but he will also work in his greenhouse or on his allotment and his family may have a loom. For others there will be the small factories owned perhaps by a group of families in a way that might appeal to Guild Socialists. The prospect seems the only one which will avoid the peril of a propertyless proletariat which, despairing of possessing pro-

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ductive property, is tempted by that last vile heresy that since few own now, no one shall own in the future. That would be death to Rhondda.

Already Rhondda is encompassed about with a twilight which has not yet come to the richer countryside. Rhondda exhibits the terrible failure of that quantitative individualism which hides the good taste of a living and traditional people. Rhondda uses all those devices of that kind of society which has brought it to its present impasse. It has its committees, its agendas, its public meetings of protest, its open forums, and its free speech. These democratic institutions flourish in Rhondda with a feverishness which fails to hide the interior sickness of their democratic disillusionment. All that stuff euphemistically called liberalism — a pathetic belief in Necessary Progress, in democratic institutions written upon paper, in a vast commercial apparatus built up by a plutocracy whose base system of ethics permeates all society, in a laicized state in which there is an awful unconcern for the soul, and in Marxism its last bitter fruit — all that is likely to go before the advance of a hierarchic society directed to its home and end.

The legacy of liberalism has produced a still flourishing belief in the superiority of London to Rome, and a still unyielding intuition that mistakes the multiplication of a society's wants for Progress. In his great work, *The European Workers*, Le Play demonstrated that the bases of any social group are six, namely, Hunting, Food Gathering, Pastoral Work,

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Fishing, Agriculture, and Mining. Le Play proved also that in any given European river valley there exists potentially or actually all the types of men needed to establish a formally perfect culture. This culture need not remain merely formally complete, but by the various types reacting against each other, the form will be developed even in spite of townee conditions. Rhondda is a river valley, and until the pre-occupation with mining, all the types Le Play saw were there. But the elimination from the active culture of three of them, and the diminution of two others has led to an unbalanced culture which has brought its own evil consequences. The pain and suffering which has come with economic collapse may call her people away from the shams of a mechanical progress which attends on the heels of an advancing technique in the actions of doing and making. What Nietzsche called 'the plebeianism of the European spirit' is all that this march brings. In place of this modern erring journey which has already twisted and scattered the souls of men, there is the journey towards the Christian tradition which has ever been kindly disposed to the primary form of a living society.

Some foreknowledge Rhondda has of such a future, for even if the memories of her past are dim, and the annals of her bards are almost forgotten, that future hangs upon the permanence of that living tradition which is written in the secret place of the heart. In the last resort Rhondda will defend that tradition against that innovation which removes Rhondda from her

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roots; in the coming struggle there will be two kinds of rebel, he who resists that innovation in the defence of tradition, and he who is prepared to amputate himself and society from that tradition in order to amputate himself and society from a wretched but transient plutocratic system. With poverty acting as catalyst the clash will become critical and only he who is fortified by the past will endure to the end.

Rhondda bears the marks of swift moving changes. There the old and true prophecy that the hills and mountains shall become low has present significance. That spells hope for Rhondda. For too long has the pain been endured and the chord of suspense is stretched taut. But Rhondda has its refuges; in Bethel and Pisgah, at All Saints and Our Lady of Pen Rhÿs, at Quakers' Meeting and at the Citadel the varying liturgies of that waiting and watching are conserved. The pre-requisite for a change in the social order is a change in the emotions of men. Rhondda is a sign of the terrible failure of the secular society — the base 'republic' which has no other end than material gain. The republic is failing because it demanded from man the unbearable strain of living too emotional lives — a strain which is now robbing him of his inner spiritual life. Society as it is constituted cares a surprising amount for regulating people's lives in comparatively petty matters such as hygiene (soap) and temperance (alcohol), but it does not care twopence about the sanitation of the soul, or the exciting virtue of the balanced soul. Society has for too long subordinated

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the spiritual to the temporal, and since men must direct their lives to some focal point most men direct them to Mammon. Marxism the more firmly binds him to it. As for Rhondda, those straggling lines of cottages, that dusty river, those precious if ugly chapels lit up within by the glow of worship, and the iron superstructures of the collieries are not to remain for ever. They were built so rapidly and they will go perhaps before the century ends. The cathedrals took many, many generations to build and men delight still in building them, but that delight remains because throughout time men have in some measure cared for the Eternal. The collieries were reared upon the organic and complete life of the old Rhondda, just as the industrialist capitalist system was reared above the hierarchic and articulated society.

What will endure in Rhondda is not the mileage of streets, the dirt of the river, the barrenness of the hills and the proletarian depression of her people, but that creative human spirit which survives every kind of material obstacle. Rhondda was mining coal many years before it was the agricultural area Leland wrote of, and there is no reason why Rhondda should relinquish coal mining altogether for the second time. But whether it continues to mine coal or whether it recovers its old place as one of the wheat-growing areas of Wales, future Rhondda generations will enjoy a richer life in which artifice will flourish and in which the imagination and the intellect will combine in some of the finest achievements of the human projected will.

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A social order that provides such a banquet will be truly democratic in so far as it is governed by the people unimpeded by exotic influences. It will be truly *conservative*, for change will be viewed with suspicion unless it is the reflection of the customs and tastes of the peoples. It will be truly *hierarchic* and *aristocratic*, since it will be maintained by an order of values administered by the wisest and the best. It will be truly *liberal*, since men will be encouraged to pursue their proper ends. It will be truly *socialistic*, since it will be an integrated social body. And it will be truly *progressive*, since it will constantly move towards that blessedness which is the goal of the human city. Such a society might begin with a fast, and the ascetic habit might fall easily upon it during its existence, but the fast must come before the feast.

The coming adventure for the Rhondda young man or girl is not outside the valley in some busy township with a place in the sun. The heroic scene for them both will soon be found in Rhondda itself. Once a valley of dry bones, but one day breath will re-enter it. Can these bones live? The answer is, 'Prophecy upon these dead bones'. We may not live to see that renovation. Many years are to pass before we even know of that hour of wordless longing, and experience that homesickness (*hiraeth*) which some have begun to feel. But meanwhile for those who are drawn to social activity there comes a clear message to prepare for a new world in which there shall be not one new Rhondda, not one Good Patch, but

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wherever there are groups of men as many Good Patches.

To participate in that work needs careful preparation of the heart, 'which has its reasons as much as the head'. It is a work bearing all the characteristics of a war distinctly holy and just, and therefore the only war worth while. 'So we go gathering Christian men.'

APPENDIX

IMPORTANT DATES IN, SOUTH WELSH AND RHONDDA HISTORY

A.D.

- 52 Defeat of Silures by Ostorius Scapala
- 78 Construction of military highway, The Via
Julia Maritima
- 408 Departure of Romans
- 436 Dyfrig as Bishop of Llandaff
- 546 Battle of Camlan, death of Arthur
- 1093 Conquest of Glamorgan by Robert Fitzhamon;
Death of Tewdur ap Rhys in Rhondda
- 1107 Robert Consul, 1st Earl of Gloucester, Lord of
Glamorgan
- 1120 Norman Cathedral of Llandaff commenced
- 1129 Founding of Neath Abbey by Richard the
Granville
- 1140 Ewenny Priory by William de Londres
- 1147 Margam Abbey, Robert, 1st Earl of Gloucester
- 1147 Benedictine Priory at Cardiff
- 1153 Capture of Cardiff Castle by Ivor Bach, Castell
Coch
- 1171 Henry II through Cardiff on way to Ireland
- 1173 John Earl of Montaigne, after made King John,
Earl of Glamorgan
- 1188 Preaching of Second Crusade in South Wales

APPENDIX

A.D.

- 1199** De Clares, Lords of Glamorgan
- 1256** Founding of Black Friars Monastery in Cardiff
- 1280** Founding of Grey Friars Monastery in Cardiff
- 1282** Conquest of Wales by Edward I; Glamorgan
made a shire
- 1314** Eighth Gilbert de Clare killed at Bannockburn
- 1315** Rebellion of Llewellyn Brin
- 1326** Edward II fugitive in Glamorgan
- 1350** Giraldus floruit
- 1402** Owain Glyndwr's first visit to Glamorgan;
Eisteddfod at Pen Rhŷs
- 1485** Jasper Tudor, Lord of Glamorgan
- 1535** Incorporation of marches of Wales into
counties
- 1536** Dissolution of the monasteries
- 1547** Charter granted to William Herbert to work
iron ore at Llantrisant
- 1563** Passing Act for translation of Scriptures into
Welsh
- 1583** Mines Royal company opened copper smelting
works at Neath
- 1588** Publication of Dr. Morgan's Welsh Bible
- 1595** Dr. William Morgan, Bishop of Llandaff
- 1607** Great flood in South Wales; St. Mary's Church,
Cardiff, washed away
- 1642** Civil War began
- 1645** King Charles sought asylum in South Wales
- 1648** Cromwell and Ironsides in South Wales
- 1717** Copper smelting works by Dr. Lane at Llandovery

APPENDIX

A.D.

- 1727 Copper smelting works at Taibach
- 1755 Erection of one-arched bridge at Pontypridd by
William Edwards
- 1758 Iron smelting furnaces at Merthyr by Lewis of
the Van
- 1770 First printing press in county at Cowbridge
- 1795 Glamorgan Canal from Cardiff to Navigation
Colliery
- 1795 Neath Canal
- 1798 Swansea Canal
- 1799 First iron smelting furnace in Aberdare Valley
- 1804 Trial of Trevethick's 'high pressure locomotive'
from Penydarren to Navigation
- 1811 Nantgarw porcelain factory by Billingsley
- 1814 Swansea porcelain factory
- 1822 Port Tennant Canal
- 1839 First docks opened at Cardiff
- 1841 Opening of Taff Vale Railway to Merthyr
Tydfil
- 1846 Opening of Taff Vale Railway to Aberdare
- 1846 Commission of Enquiry on Education in Wales
- 1847 First docks at Swansea
- 1850 Taff Vale Railway to Treherbert
- 1850 South Wales Great Western Railway opened to
Swansea
- 1851 Vale of Neath Railway
- 1857 Modern restoration of Llandaff Cathedral
completed
- 1858 Rhymney Railway

APPENDIX

A.D.

- 1865** Penarth Docks
- 1883** Cardiff University College
- 1889** Barry Dock and Railway
- 1894** University of Wales
- 1906** Cardiff raised to dignity of city
- 1911** Tonypany riots
- 1914-** Great War: Time of prosperity for Rhondda
- 1918** coal
- 1926** General Strike
- 1927-** Distress: Lord Mayor's Fund
- 1936** Sanctions against Italy affect coal exports
Commissions sent; New Trading Estates opened
at Treforest

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[*Modern spelling of Welsh place-names has been used*]

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